

# Research title

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Christian relief and development from a Kingdom perspective: practical considerations on the outworking of Christian poverty reduction efforts, with special reference to *missio Dei* and its potential influence on NGO strategy development.

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# Acknowledgements

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The author is grateful for the help, encouragement and prayer support received from:

- *Tearfund*: especially for the advice and assistance in arranging the Sabbatical and research; in particular members of the International Group who have covered during his absence.
- *Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS)*: especially for the faculty staff, support staff and students, who have provided guidance, fellowship and assistance with the studies and research.
- Family and friends at home, church and beyond: for their encouragement and love.

The author is particularly thankful to the many writers who by putting pen to paper have shared their insights and brought about a great depth of richness and understanding to the subject of *missio Dei* – God’s mission.

Finally, the author acknowledges the Triune God. It is hoped that the research will serve His purpose and bring Him glory.

# Introduction

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## Overview

Facts and figures on world poverty are alarming, with an estimated 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty – one quarter of the population of the developing world. Men, women and children needlessly die in their millions each year because of disease, hunger, lack of water and sanitation. Women and children, the defenceless, are especially helpless. The environment is continuously being exploited, especially at the expense of the most vulnerable.

The reported additional financial resources needed to eradicate poverty are easily realizable given the world monetary resources available. According to World Bank figures, an additional US\$80 billion a year is all that is required – less than a tenth of what is annually spent on world military.

However, financial resources in the fight against poverty are not the whole answer. Increased spending on health, nutrition, water, sanitation and so forth using the traditional socio-economic approach to poverty reduction will go a long way to help, but spend in these areas will not necessarily tackle the consequences of wrongdoing that bring about poverty or intensify it: greed, corruption, oppression, selfish actions. Indeed, on occasions increased funding and resultant outcomes of “development” projects seem to exacerbate the problem and fuel selfish actions: it is all too easy for admirable efforts to fail in the longer-term.

Rather than just take the traditional economic and physical approach to poverty, this research looks at a more integral or holistic approach. An integral approach includes the building of relationships between people at all levels of society, on the basis that if people genuinely care for one another, then poverty will be tackled as an outcome. If people’s actions are motivated by the care for one another, by selfless actions then good governance will result, fair policies will be developed and implemented, healthy communities will grow. Such a perspective doesn’t exclude physical actions in the areas of food security, health, education and so forth, rather it complements it. Such an approach will also help tackle problems such as the breakdown of family life and communities – the integrity of which is seen by many as essential in combating poverty.

An integral approach from a Christian perspective centres on the Biblical narrative – that people are on a journey, participating in building a just and fair world here on earth now to tackle deprivation in all its forms so that every person may enjoy fullness of life, which will be brought to completion at the end of time – the *eschaton*. The journey is very relational in nature, building relations with God, and with one another. Such a Christian perspective has many relational and end time aspects that are common in other faiths, but are generally excluded from a traditional approach, which centres on the here and now with a socio-economic focus.

Thus to tackle poverty effectively and sustainably, people of all status need to be liberated from their wrong ways that bring about poverty; people need to be released from such bondage so that they may find new ways of doing things, ways that transform human relationships, ways that embrace the love of one another with resultant justice, equality, peace and hope.

From a Christian standpoint, The Triune God has provided the means to achieve this. Out of His love for all people and for all of creation, God the Father gave His one and only Son, Christ Jesus of Nazareth, and raised Him to life by the power of the Holy Spirit so that all may be redeemed: in order that all people may be *forgiven* for their transgressions and be liberated from such bondage. Such a freedom will provide the decisive solution to poverty. Through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus it is possible for people to be reconciled to God. As individuals develop their relationship with the Father through Christ Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit, then the individual's communion with the Triune God grows. And as this communion with God grows, then they, in the ever-increasing likeness of Christ Jesus, will reflect more and more of God's love for others. Individuals being transformed in this way will have a growing desire to participate in God's mission – and amongst many other worthy things, have a desire to respond to the challenges of reducing poverty, motivated by the love of God and the love of others. People will learn to love one another, will turn to selfless actions and values.

Such a redemptive plan, deemed from Old Testament times, is part of **God's mission**: that people of all nations may enjoy fullness of life. Poverty in the world is against God's will, and He is active to bring about a change, to bring about His kingdom here on earth, a kingdom where there will be right relationships with Him and with one another - and as a consequence poverty will become history. The kingdom is for all people and working for the kingdom means opposing what is wrong in the world and seeking what is good, to build relationships, to serve and to forgive one another. The kingdom will reach fulfilment, be brought into perfection, at the end of time with the gift of eternal life for His people.

**Mission is God's mission** (*missio Dei*), and it is a mission that goes beyond the church. It embraces everything that God is doing in the world through people and nations to establish His Kingdom here on earth – within the church and beyond the church. It is a mission that all Christians are called to participate and have an immense privileged to do so. Thus God's work is not limited to the endeavours of the church, but the church does have a special role, sent by God to continue in His mission. Whilst Christians are called to participate, it is not dependant on them: God's activities extend wider than the church and God has been active since the beginning of time, going before the church to all people and all nations, active in all creation through those of other faiths and those of no faith. Such a truth should be an encouragement to Christians and non-Christians alike, that there is an almighty and loving God at work in the world bringing about change in all places, with and beyond the church.

Thus the church and people of the world are on a journey, being transformed. The church has a central role in this, sent by God to participate in His mission. As the church actively gets engaged in God's mission, she herself becomes more and more transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus. As non-Christians experience the witness and proclamation of the Gospel message in word and deed, as they experience God working through them, they too are transformed.

While the importance of the Church is evident, there is the acknowledgement that the church can often be part of the problem when it comes to poverty. However, the global communion of churches in general recognizes her weaknesses and works to correct them. It is important not to confuse the church with God; the church makes no claim to be perfect, but strives to be so and points to the Christ Jesus who is.

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The kingdom of God is of concern for all people. Everyone is on a journey, and God is able to work through all people, without them necessarily acknowledging Him or accepting Christ Jesus as Lord. Thus transformation towards doing the right thing can occur without there being salvation. These instances are part of the journey, as people seek faith, healing and a desire for forgiveness. And the journey will be complete when it leads to salvation in Jesus Christ, with the eternal significance that God desires for all.

The centrality of God's mission in Christian relief and development organizational thinking and planning is essential. God's mission provides the framework for all that is done organizationally, internally and externally: it provides a means to prioritize activities, to measure achievements. It permits the organization to give precedence to the Gospel over people's desires, to offer the highest understanding and meaning of why it is doing what it is doing: and positively determine when it has achieved what it set out to achieve. To be able to take part in God's mission provides a powerful and purposeful role for the organization and all who are connected with it.

In applying the *missio Dei* concept to Christian relief and development organizations, a logical framework approach has been taken using the following generic vision and mission statements for the organization:

- **Vision:** to participate in God's mission to restore all creation to wholeness.
- **Mission:** to be faithful witnesses in word and deed to God's redeeming love and work.

To achieve such a mission, the task of the organizations' staff, supporters and partners is summarized as: revealing a new way of living and working, according to kingdom ways and values; and being involved in action bearing witness to God's redeeming love.

Indicators of success centre on obedience to God, rather than measurements of outcomes or results.

In the work and life of a Christian organization, the spiritual and physical cannot be separated. These two aspects are integral and thus the mission of the organization is one where "evangelism" and social action go together: *integral mission*. A church or Christian organization that is engaging in just one aspect or other will always be incomplete – they will ultimately fail the people they serve.

At the *International congress on World Evangelism in Lausanne in 1974*, evangelism was defined as "The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world". Evangelism involves witnessing, and witness is central to the life of a Christian and a Christian organization. There are various forms of witness but no set formula. Whilst ultimately the process of witness to Christ Jesus must include the proclamation of the Word of God, the aid offered to the poor remains totally unconditional. The motivation to help the poor is one of reflecting God's love for those in need: it will only be through love that right relationships will come about, that transformation will take place. **The love of God and love for others should be the driving force for all Christian organizations.**

Participating in God's mission will inevitably shape the structure, policies, and personnel mix of a Christian organization, as well as determine how they work, who they work with and work through. The need to be connected to God in all that is said and done is fundamental to the working of a Christian organization and will have implications on: strategy development; implementation of projects, staff recruitment and deployment; and partner selection.

The drawing together of Christians from the Two-thirds world and the Western world, and the local and global coming together, will provide a coordinated response using their various gifts. Such a joined-up response, rooted in the accompaniment and empowerment of the local church and development of local leadership will help provide greater sustainability. A liaison of the Christian, other faiths and the secular, each with their distinctive contribution, will acknowledge the sovereignty of God and His ability to work through all.

Finally, there is a central place for the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines in the life of a Christian organization and its Christian partners. The importance of being in communion with God and being able to discern His will cannot be overstated. And that to know His will is a tremendous blessing, but also a massive responsibility to carry it out (Pearson 1995, p54,55).

## About the research

The research presented in this document explores various aspects of *missio Dei* and their potential impact on the life of Christian relief and development organizations. The author conducted the research at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), UK, as an OCMS Research Associate whilst on Sabbatical from Tearfund.

The research is:

- taken from a **Kingdom perspective**;
- conducted from a **Christian belief in the Triune God**: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – intrinsically united;
- structured within a **Creation, Fall, Redemption and Eschatological** framework;
- viewed from a ***missio Dei* concept** – that the mission is God's and the church is called to participate; to take part in God's redemptive action to restore His creation to wholeness through Christ Jesus so that people may, through the bond of the Holy Spirit, be one with God and with one another.

At the heart of the research is an attempt to assist Christian relief and development organizations think through why they are doing what they are doing. This points to the need for clarity of understanding of God's mission, in which Christians are invited to participate. Clarity in this area will assist determine an organization's actions and activities.

The results of this research are framed in the Biblical narrative – a narrative that embraces the Creation; Fall; Redemption; and Eschatological framework.

*God's story is at heart a simple one. In a nutshell, it is the story of creation and redemption by the God of Israel and Father of the risen Christ, working through the Holy Spirit. God's story tells us how things started, lost their way, can be redirected, and how the human story comes out in the end.*

*But the biblical story is a very unusual story. We are told the beginning, the middle, and the final chapter of the story. But the piece between Jesus and his work on the cross and*

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*the final chapter is still being written. God's story is not just about what God has done, but also about what God, through his church is doing now. God is still writing the story, and incredibly, God has invited us to participate in that writing (Bryant 1998, p23).*

It is a narrative that has not been paralleled since its formation, and indeed never will be. The narrative unveils the situation, brings clarity and significance to what went on, what is going on, and what will happen.

The research draws upon a wealth of noteworthy writings on Christian relief and development and the area of *missio Dei*, and presents the material from a practical viewpoint to allow readers to develop their own thinking. Through a website ([www.faithindevelopment.org](http://www.faithindevelopment.org)) it also invites the reader to comment and contribute to allow adjustments, revisions, and new thoughts to be posted: which may ultimately point to further study.

Whilst the research has a Christian focus, there should be something for a wide range of readership - those of other faiths, and those taking a secular standpoint. The part played by all these sectors brings about a depth of meaning and inclusiveness that helps form an important component of the *missio Dei* concept. Of special interests to these readers will be the sections on:

- the *unconditionality* of services offered by Christian relief and development organizations;
- the *inclusive approach* in non-Christian environments;
- *communion with God and in partnership with others*: and
- the *importance of the church*.

Finally, the richness of thinking and views offered by the many authors cited in this paper presents a call for Christian organizations to take a fresh look at their mission, to encourage those aspects that reflect that of God's mission and to call for a re-evaluation of those aspects that may be out of harmony. It is also a call to secular and other faith organizations to re-assess their approach and dealings with Christian organizations and churches: to view them not as a threat with a hidden spiritual agenda, but to see them with the potential and capability to make a real contribution to poverty reduction efforts.

The research has resulted in a web-based guide ([www.faithindevelopment.org](http://www.faithindevelopment.org)) to help people become familiar with and learn about *missio Dei* and to think through its bearing on Christian poverty reduction efforts.

### About the researcher

Alan Robinson has almost 40 years experience in the relief and development sector. From 1969 to 1994 he worked for the British Government's scientific unit, the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), first involved in the development and application of lower-cost building materials from cellulosic materials and then the development and application of biomass energy systems. He left as a Principal Scientific Officer, having benefited from various roles, including Head of NRI's Biomass Energy Group and Manager of NRI's Forestry and Biomass Energy Programme.

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Alan joined Tearfund in 1994 and was assigned as an advisor to a partner organization, MOPAWI, in Honduras for 4 years. He is now involved with bilateral and multilateral donors, as part of Tearfund's International Group, and working at Tearfund's headquarters in Teddington, UK.

During his time with the NRI and Tearfund he has travelled extensively and has spent a total of around 10 years living and working overseas in over 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean; Africa and Asia.

# Definition of poverty

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Clarity on the definition of poverty is important as this will help determine the actions to tackle it. Among others, the European Union, World Bank and United Nations have published definitions based on their understandings which are in the main characterized by the deprivation of basic physical human needs. Within these categories are levels of poverty severity, including: extreme; absolute; and relative.

*Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets. Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, and children growing up in poverty are often permanently disadvantaged. Older people, people with disabilities, indigenous people, refugees and internally displaced persons are also particularly vulnerable to poverty. Furthermore, poverty in its various forms represents a barrier to communication and access to services, as well as a major health risk, and people living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of disasters and conflicts. Absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services. (United Nations 2000, Ch2, Sect19)*

*The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live. (EC 1984)*

*Poor people live without fundamental freedoms of action and choice that the better-off take for granted. They often lack adequate food and shelter, education and health, deprivations that keep them from leading the kind of life that everyone values. They also face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disasters. And they are often exposed to ill treatment by institutions of the state and society and are powerless to influence key decisions affecting their lives. These are all dimensions of poverty. (The World Bank 2001, p1)*

Indicators have largely been along economic and physical lines – in the simplest terms, those living on US\$1 for extreme poverty and US\$2 for absolute poverty: which together cover about half the world's population. Indicators are important, because success or failure in the fight against poverty is measured against them.

Clearly the above holds a logical validity within the definitions and parameters set and has guided and served aid agencies over many years. However, thinking outside such definitions and parameters, it fails to explain or at least address the situation found in some cases whereby “poor” people may not themselves say they are or feel poor, and conversely, when the “non-poor” say they are or feel poor: it does not explain the times when “poor” people appear at harmony and content with what little they have, and when the “non-poor” experience discord and feel discontented. Furthermore, it doesn't acknowledge the situation whereby when the “poor” are lifted out of

poverty, it is often accompanied by an increase in inequality at a national level (United Nations 2007, p8) or it fails to address aspects of discord within a community or problems regarding poor governance, corruption, quests for power at the expense of others and so forth.

Rather than just take the traditional economic and physical approach to poverty, this paper looks at a more integral or holistic approach. An integral approach includes the building of relationships between people at all levels of society, on the basis that if people genuinely care for one another, then poverty will be tackled as an outcome. If people's actions are motivated by the care for one another, by selfless actions then good governance will result, fair policies will be developed and implemented, healthy communities will grow. Such a perspective doesn't exclude physical actions in the areas of food security, health, education, and so forth, rather it complements it. Such an approach will also help tackle problems such as the breakdown of family life and communities – the integrity of which is seen by many as essential in combating poverty.

Taking an integral approach will determine a set of *additional* actions over and above that of the traditional approach. There is an interest in people as a people, rather than simply people in terms of their financial or physical circumstances. An integral approach will embrace many aspects of traditional poverty reduction efforts – complementing such efforts and helping make them complete.

An integral approach from a Christian perspective centres on the Biblical narrative – that people are on a journey, participating in building a just and fair world here on earth now to tackle deprivation in all its forms so that humans may flourish, that every person may enjoy fullness of life, which will be brought to completion at the end of time – the *eschaton*. The journey is very relational in nature, building relations with God, and with one another. Such a Christian perspective has many relational and end time aspects that are common in other faiths, but are generally excluded from a secular traditional approach.

## A Kingdom perspective

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The Kingdom of God, or reign of God, describes His sovereign rule over all creation as king and father: it is a rule governed by His love for creation, rather than governed merely by power. It is a rule that requires faithful obedience from those who acknowledge Him, but cannot be undermined by those who resist Him. The kingdom is present here on earth now through the coming of His Son Jesus Christ, but also points to the future – the *eschaton* - when the kingdom will reach perfection at the end of time.

The future kingdom is one where there will be a full and complete communion with God, with one another and with all creation; beauty; splendour; peace; fruitfulness; no tears; and no more death or mourning or crying or pain. (Isaiah 11:6; Rev 21:4). Where the love, holiness and glory of God will fill our hearts in His personal presence: there will be joy, gratitude, worship – true and total freedom.

The kingdom of God is for all people to enter. Within the kingdom of God the vulnerable, the marginalized have a particular mention to emphasise the inclusive nature of the kingdom, and are shown special favour (Harkness 1974, Chapter 3). From Christ Jesus' early ministry He proclaimed some fundamentals of the kingdom:

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18,19; Isaiah 61:1,2)*

The liberation that Christ Jesus of Nazareth came to offer is the very sign of the kingdom and the hope of the people. God the Father, out of His love for all people, gave His one and only Son, Christ Jesus on the Cross, and raised Him to life by the power of the Holy Spirit so that all may be redeemed: in order that all people may be *forgiven* for their sins and be liberated from such bondage. Through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus it is possible for people to be reconciled to God, to have a right relationship with Him through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the liberation and salvation message of the kingdom through Christ Jesus. Human relationships are transformed in God's kingdom, which will reach fulfilment when people are in communion with God and with one another.

The Kingdom of God is of concern for all people, including non-Christians. Everyone is on a journey, and God is able to work through all people, without them necessarily acknowledging Him or accepting Christ Jesus as Lord. Thus transformation can occur without there being salvation: such occasions are part of the kingdom story, as people seek faith, healing and a desire for forgiveness. And the journey will be complete when it leads to salvation in Jesus Christ, with the eternal significance that God desires for all.

The church has a central role in working for the kingdom, the church is sent by Christ Jesus to continue in His mission and to participate in the reconciling work of the Spirit (Goheen 2001, p 117). Thus working for the extension of the kingdom is the activity for all Christians, including Christian relief and development agencies. Working for the kingdom is an invitation to take part in the transforming of human relationships, an invitation to proclaim in word and deed the message of

liberation and salvation that Christ Jesus embodied in his public ministry and death on the Cross and His resurrection.

*The Church needs to recover this vision of the Kingdom and offer this hope to the nations. The world without the Gospel of the Kingdom is just a world. It has not awareness of purpose. But once confronted by the Kingdom or faced with the presence of the church, it becomes aware of its purpose. (Vencer 2002, p50)*

*The value of Kingdom Work: As citizens of God's kingdom, we may not just write off the present earth as a total loss, or rejoice in its deterioration. We must indeed be working for a better world now. Our efforts to bring the kingdom of Christ into fuller manifestation are of eternal significance. Our Christian life today, our work, our struggles against sin – both individually and institutional – our mission work, our attempt to develop and promote distinctive Christian culture, have value not only for this world but even for the world to come. (Hoekema 1979, p287)*

*... For now, however, they are trying to build the Kingdom of God one person at a time. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p5)*

*The Kingdom of God then is the redemptive activity of God in history through the person of Jesus Christ. It does not arrive by human achievement. Humans are, however, invited to repentance and faith by which they enter the Kingdom, and are invited to both the responsible participation in the Kingdom-already-arrived, and to the watchful expectation of the Kingdom-still-to-come. (Samuel & Sugden 1999, p154)*

*...these individuals were praying for their families, their neighbours, and their government. They wanted to bring the kingdom of God to earth, and the starting point for this transformation was cleansing the sin in their own lives. Only then would they be equipped to work on the corruption around them. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p13)*

*Jesus' Lordship is the content of the Kingdom, not Kingdom ethics. Kingdom ethics arise from the acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord of everything. They are not about behaviour in a Kingdom society, nor a blueprint to be imposed legalistically, but are about how people behave who live out Jesus' teaching of the rule of God. They are a response of love to Jesus' Lordship. (Sugden & Barclay 1990, p14)*

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical letter on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, *Redemptoris Missio*, (Paulus 1990, sections 14 & 15) wrote:

*Jesus gradually reveals the characteristics and demands of the kingdom through his words, his actions and his own person.*

*The kingdom of God is meant for all mankind, and all people are called to become members of it. To emphasize this fact, Jesus drew especially near to those on the margins of society, and showed them special favor in announcing the Good News. At the beginning of his ministry he proclaimed that he was "anointed...to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). To all who are victims of rejection and contempt Jesus declares: "Blessed are you poor" (Lk 6:20). What is more, he enables such individuals to experience liberation even now, by being close to them, going to eat in their homes (cf. Lk 5:30; 15:2), treating them as equals and friends (cf. Lk 7:34), and making them feel loved by God, thus revealing his tender care for the needy and for sinners (cf. Lk 15:1-32).*

*The liberation and salvation brought by the kingdom of God come to the human person both in his physical and spiritual dimensions. Two gestures are characteristic of Jesus' mission: healing and forgiving. Jesus' many healings clearly show his great compassion in the face of human distress, but they also signify that in the kingdom there will no longer be sickness or suffering, and that his mission, from the very beginning, is meant to free people from these evils. In Jesus' eyes, healings are also a sign of spiritual salvation, namely liberation from sin. By performing acts of healing, he invites people to faith, conversion and the desire for forgiveness (cf. Lk 5:24). Once there is faith, healing is an encouragement to go further: it leads to salvation (cf. Lk 18:42-43). The acts of liberation*

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*from demonic possession-the supreme evil and symbol of sin and rebellion against God-are signs that indeed "the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:28).*

*The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. Jesus sums up the whole Law, focusing it on the commandment of love (cf. Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). Before leaving his disciples, he gives them a "new commandment": "Love one another; even as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34; cf. 15:12). Jesus' love for the world finds its highest expression in the gift of his life for mankind (cf. Jn 15:13), which manifests the love which the Father has for the world (cf. Jn 3:16). The kingdom's nature, therefore, is one of communion among all human beings-with one another and with God.*

*The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society, and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness (Paulus 1990, sections 14 & 15).*

# The Trinity

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Throughout the articles that are cited, there is sometimes a preference for writers to have a particular focus on one or more of the three Persons of the Trinity. However, the basis for mission is Trinitarian and the doctrine of the Trinity - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and their intrinsic unity - is central to a proper understanding of mission.

Essential to the Trinity is communion – a perfect communion between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The communion is the expression of the relationship within the Trinity, a relationship of ontological equality, oneness in love (So 2006, p265-267). It is the kind of communion that God desires for humankind, people in communion with God and with each other. God the Father sent His Son, Christ Jesus to reconcile humankind to Himself, that through Christ Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit people may be made one with God and with one another: God's mission founded on God's nature of love and communion. As individuals develop their relationship with the Father through Christ Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit, then the individual's communion with the Triune God grows. And as this communion with God grows, then they, in the ever-increasing likeness of Christ Jesus, will reflect more and more of God's love for others. Individuals being transformed in this way will have a growing desire to participate in God's mission – and amongst many other worthy things, have a desire to respond to the challenges of reducing poverty, motivated by the love of God and the love of others.

*The development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early Church was only the making explicit of that which is from the beginning the presupposition and the context, the source and the goal of the mission of Jesus. It is in Trinitarian terms that we have to understand the nature and authority of the mission in which we are called to share.*

*For a true understanding of the Church's mission we need to take seriously this Trinitarian model, rooted as it is in the realities from which the mission comes. Mission is proclaiming the reign of the Father in and over all things, a reign which is the reality with which all men have to deal, whether they believe it or not. Mission is calling men into the Body of his Son, the corporate life of that community which goes through history not as the "winning side", not as the place where "success" will be found, but as the bearer of the marks of Christ's passion, as the place where we share in those groanings and tribulations which are the birth pangs of a new creation (Rom. 8). Mission is responding to the action of the Holy Spirit who, in his sovereign freedom, goes ahead of the Church, prepares the way for the gospel, and leads men and women in his own way into the obedience of Christ. (Newbiggin 1977 p214,215)*

*The missionary movement, of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.... We who have been chosen in Christ, ... are by these very facts committed to full participation in His redeeming mission. There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world-mission. (Richebächer 2003, p589)*

*If we are serious about our Christianity we must be serious about our relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we are serious about that relationship we will be changed from glory to glory (1 Corinthians 3:18), if we are changed from glory to glory we will change the situation in which we live. If we change the situation in which we live we will change society. (Seale 2002, p68)*

*No less than the sacraments, the creed recited in the Eucharistic service reminds us of our Trinitarian faith: in God who is the source of all that is; in Jesus Christ who underwent death for our sakes and was raised from the dead; in the Spirit who was present in salvation history from the very beginning, speaking through the prophets and now leading us through Christ back to God. (LaCugna 1986, p211)*

In Catherine LaCugna's article on "The Practical Trinity" (LaCugna 1992), she explains the doctrine of the Trinity and articulates its importance in understanding the gospel demands and its relation to social transformation. A better understanding of the communion of the Triune God, will give a clearer understanding of God's redemptive plan for human communion – where people are in relationship with one another, with equality, existing together in harmony, co-workers in Christ in communion with the Triune God: a single universal communion.

*The Doctrine of the Trinity, to summarize, is a doctrine about God. But because it is a doctrine about the God who shares life with us in an economy of redemption, it is also a doctrine about salvation. Further, because it uses the idea of "person" and "relation" to affirm that God is essentially personal and relational, the doctrine of the Trinity is also the foundation for a theology of the human person, and a theology of right relationship. Finally, because it affirms that persons, whether divine or human, are made to exist in loving communion with one another, the doctrine of the Trinity is also the foundation for a vision of society and a vision of the church which is to be a sign to the world of the ultimate destiny of all creatures... Living the Trinitarian faith entails living as Jesus Christ did: with total confidence in God; as a peaceful, merciful, healing, forgiving presence; praying and praising God constantly; welcoming the outcast and sinner. Living God's life means living according to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit – becoming holy and virtuous, and contributing to the unity of the Christian community and the harmony among all of God's creatures. (LaCugna 1992, p681,682)*

In Vinay Samuel's consultative report (Samuel 2008) he writes of the community of believers and their relationship with the Trinitarian God:

*People hood: From a Christian point of view this is the 'being' aspect of a community. It is ontological in character. It draws its identity as a people and community not just from shared concerns and commitments, but also from reflecting the presence and image of the Trinitarian God. It is here that Christian communities have a unique witness. They are more than a gathering of believers. They are Being in Communion. In religiously plural contexts one of the most powerful demonstrations of the transforming power of the Gospel is the quality of community, communion and people hood that Christians experience and share. (Samuel 2008, p24)*

Since there is ontological equality between the three Persons of the Trinity, Christ Jesus gave an objective revelation of God the Father as he lived in unbroken communion with his Father through the Holy Spirit (So 2006, p278). Thus to know God the Son is to know God the Father (John14:9). With the objective revelation comes total confidence that what God the Son revealed about God the Father is the truth, and will always remain the truth.

The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, while working through the objectivity of the Son, is also working through the subjectivity of believers. Subjectivity led by the Spirit provides Christians the freedom and flexibility to live out the gospel message, to serve God and humankind, to participate in God's mission in differing ways. Thus there is no legalistic blueprint for a Christian life or way of doing things; there is no fixed blueprint for the life of a Christian organization. A Christian in the power of the Holy Spirit, united to his or her Christian community and to God, can arrive at a conclusion on what to do, with a confidence based on God's objectivity, as revealed in His Word, which includes biblical commands, principles and values that need to be upheld.

Subjectivity, while providing Christians with flexibility, can introduce possibilities for error. While truth and perfection exist in the three divine persons, falsehood and imperfection can enter through the participation of believers. To reduce the likelihood of error it is important to: maintain close communion with God at all times; have a good understanding of God's word; and apply biblical commands and principles sensitively and wisely. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in all these is thus essential within an organization – in all areas: with technical issues; policy; strategies; specialism; economics; administration; bureaucracy; and so forth. It is God the Holy Spirit who according to the objectivity of the revealed Son of God will guide and empower the staff and work of the Christian organization. There is no other objective and subjective source of energy and guidance.

The Holy Spirit as the third person of the Triune God is (Mix 2000):

- omnipresent - at work in all places, at all times;
  - *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever (John14:16)*
  - *Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139: 7-10)*
- omnipotent - with unlimited power and authority;
  - *All these (gifts) are the work of the one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Cor 12:11)*
- omniscient - knowing everything
  - *but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit, the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Cor2:10,11)*

Thus the Holy Spirit is at work at all times in all things, with total knowledge of the Father; there is absolutely no activity outside His sphere. The Holy Spirit will provide Christian organizations with a proper understanding of truths, new ways of doing things, fresh approaches to problems, and abilities to carry out the tasks ahead – the apparently attainable tasks, and tasks that appear impossible.

The Holy Spirit does not impose Himself upon those people who in their vanity presume that they can accomplish God's mission by their own human strength. But the Holy Spirit comes alongside with those who acknowledge their need for Him. Christians need to be open to the Spirit and to work with the Spirit, and as the Spirit works in them, they become more knowledgeable and wise in the mission of God.

*Any transformational development that is not guided, empowered, and made effective by the Holy Spirit will not prove sustainable. Furthermore, expecting and praying for supernatural interventions by the Spirit must be part of the spirituality of Christian development workers. (Myers 1998, p40)*

*... the Pentecostal Christian framework that affirms the Holy Spirit's intervention in their lives contributes to many individuals engaging in heroic and self-sacrificial commitments. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p114)*

*Definition: ...define Progressive Pentecostals as Christians who claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus and seek to holistically address the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community. Typically they are distinguished by their warm and expressive worship, their focus on lay-orientated ministry, their compassionate*

*service to others, and their attention, both as individuals and as a worshipping community, to what they perceive to be the leading of the Holy Spirit. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p2)*

*With the Holy Spirit as our teacher and guide, we are going to be one step ahead of our time, as He reveals to us the things that are to come. We are not going to take our cue from the world. We are going to be leading the way. (Boyce 2002, p64)*

*Within the ranks of Progressive Pentecostals are many individuals who are middle-class, upwardly mobile, and highly educated. These individuals are engaging in social analysis that reflects their class. They are not afraid of interaction with the world, because this is the sphere in which they operate on a daily basis in their employment. ... What is remarkable about this new strain of Pentecostalism is the heroic intensity of the ministries, which have not yet evolved into tired bureaucracies. The founders of these programs are driven by a sense of calling, a feeling of thankfulness for how God has intervened in their personal lives, and they are constantly reinventing their programs in response to what they perceive to be the leading of the Holy Spirit. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p127)*

*The church can fulfil its mission only as it is dynamically empowered by the Holy Spirit, God's empowering presence; and the church is most effective in its mission when its members are in continual life-giving contact with the Holy Spirit and when these encounters with the Holy Spirit are integrated into the live of the church. And the church is, in its very being, a missionary church, in so far as it shares the divine life of a sending God. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p11)*

*...Every time we mentioned "her ministry" she (Jackie Pullinger) would correct us. She resisted all categorizations of St. Stephen's Society as an organization. There was no fund-raising strategy. There was no budget that we could discern. They did no strategic planning. Instead, she said, they were guided daily by the Holy Spirit; they knew that God would provide for their needs if they were doing his work. Jackie also resisted the idea that this was a church. No, it was a collection of broken people who tried to love each other as God gave them strength. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p100)*

*... many of the young adults we interviewed referred to a reality that goes beyond the social and psychological variables referred to thus far. Namely, they had an encounter with Jesus – often mediated by what they described, according to their worldview, as the Holy Spirit – that transformed their lives. In a few instances, these encounters came in the form of visions and dreams; other respondents simply referred to the presence of Christ. Whatever the ontological reality of these encounters, the affective role they played is palpable. If one were to remove this element, it is doubtful that many individuals would have made the dramatic lifestyle changes they did. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p86)*

*The church is dependent on the Spirit for her very existence. So its words and deeds are meant to be the means for the present manifestation of the Kingdom not to be explained as merely human deeds and words. (Padilla (1999): in Samuel & Sugden 1999, p447)*

We must also recognize that the work of a Christian organization is fighting against the visible and invisible forces. The latter are at actively at work, keeping the vulnerable and marginalized pinned down.

*...the real enemies are the spiritual forces that stand behind all institutions of government and control the lives of men and nations. (Caird 1976, p91)*

*In its wider thrust the prophetic ministry calls into question, exposes and challenges the forces and powers of injustice, unrighteousness, oppression, corruption, violence and greed which are at work in society. (Taylor 2002, p76)*

# Creation

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Genesis 1 & 2 provides an overview of the Creation story.

This is the starting point, the beginning of the Bible narrative. In the Creation story, the importance of relations is stressed:

- people were created **to be in relationship** with one another and the environment (Gen 1:26-29); and
- the **need for one another** is emphasised (Gen 2: 18,24)

People were created in God's image, God's likeness: created to live in community, to be creative with purpose, and to love.

Thus was God's desire – perfect harmony between:

- people and God;
- one another; and
- people and the all of creation – the environment.

In creation, God gave humankind free will – the will to obey God or to disobey God. Free will works fine when there is accord with one another, with God, when there is no temptation to do otherwise. However temptation came – in what resulted as "the Fall", and the perfect harmony was broken.

*The entire created order is good and precious because it comes from the hand of a loving God. Persons created in the image of God are called to a servant-like stewardship of the rest of the Creator's handiwork. Tragically, humanity rebelled against God and the result is selfish persons, twisted social relationships and institutions and even a groaning, disordered creation. Unwilling to forsake fallen humanity, however, the Creator began a long historical process of salvation to restore a right relationship between God, persons and the creation around them. At the centre of that redeeming grace is Jesus Christ, Nazarene carpenter and eternal Word, who is the model for perfect humanity, atones for our sins, and rises from the dead to break the power of evil. (Sider (2008) in Singh & Farr 2008, p163)*

# The Fall

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## Introduction

Genesis 3 describes how temptation was introduced into the world, through Satan. How humans fell into sin and how people and the world has been affected in some way as a consequence. Sin is a religious term, simply meaning doing what is wrong according to God’s rules: in secular terms it would equate to actions that are “wrong” and “unethical”.

Relationships had been broken (Gen 3:16-24):

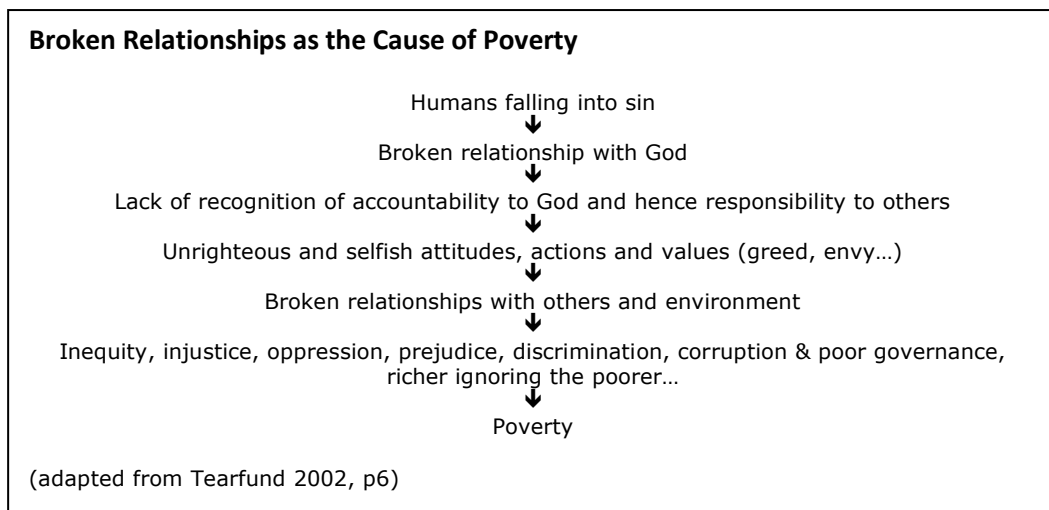
- **broken** relations between **people and God**;
- **broken** relations between **one another**; and
- **broken** relations between **people and the natural world**, the environment.

All creation is suffering from the consequences of sin: however, hope in the form of a promise of redemption from God came immediately after the fall:

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15)*

## Root cause of poverty

In 2002, a UK and Ireland Christian non-government organization, Tearfund, outlined its understanding of poverty in an internal document *Paths out of Poverty* (Tearfund 2002). It looked at the cause of poverty from a Christian perspective and concluded it stemmed from a breakdown of relationships between people and God, between one another, and between people and the environment.



The above chain of events is not to say that poor people are poor through sin in their lives, it is not to say that the poor are instruments of their own poverty. Nor is it to be read that rich people are rich because of their righteousness. Notwithstanding the doctrine of original sin - that all people, rich and poor, are without innocence - a conclusion that can be drawn from the above *Cause of Poverty* statement is that transgressions by all people, the sacrifice of truth, especially by those in authority, those with resources, results in a lack of responsibility towards others and the environment – often for conscious or unconscious self-gain.

*At the end of the day, people are the cause of poverty, and it is people who must change for things to change. (Myers 1998, p83)*

*Biblical teaching is clear that the fall has fundamentally damaged human personhood. Our moral agency, the ability to make moral choices freely is disabled, our capability to act in love of God and neighbor is reversed to act selfishly and our capacity to find and follow faith is distorted. Fallenness produces opacity we cannot see, recognize God's work and God's order. Paul writes in 2 Cor:4.4. That the God of this world has blinded human minds. We do not appreciate the consequences of creational disorder. Truth is not self-evident. Fallen humanity assumes that even truth about persons and communities is self-evident. Declarations of Independence and Rights assume that truth about persons is self-evident. It is not. Fallenness produces incapacity. Paul writes I have the desire to do good but cannot do it (Romans 7: 16). It is incapacity to act for good for the rest and myself though I am convinced of the good. (Samuel 2008, p15)*

The distortion of truth for self-gain was eloquently summarized during a sermon about truth and honesty (So 2008):

*The greatest problem we have is the distortion of truth for ordinary people. It brings about a divide – the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Where is the truth in the world? We have match fixing in sport, drug taking in athletics, cheating at games. Elected officials don't keep their promises. Media misrepresent the truth through adverts. Newspapers feign stories. In governments, local authorities and businesses, fraud, corruption and bribery are familiar events. Truth is sacrificed for self gain. Sincerity is not found in the kingdom of the world. It can be found in the Kingdom of Jesus. He is the truth, there is no falsehood. A man of truth, integrity and uprightness – side with him, not with the world, side with the one where justice and love reign (So 2008)*

And outlined in other, but complimentary, manners:

*There is a spiritual battle involved in poverty reduction. Spiritual forces, mediated through human greed and the pursuit of power, are at work to keep people poor, and lie behind many of the unequal structures of our societies. Corrupt governments and institutions have to be challenged and radically reformed. Brave people need to stand up against the powerful and supported by prayer. Communities must be built up through love and service. (Grant 2008, p60)*

*The poor are poor largely because they live in a network of relationships that do not work for their well-being. Their relationships with others are often oppressive and disempowering as a result of the non-poor playing god in the lives of the poor. Their relationship within themselves is diminished and debilitated as a result of the grind of poverty and the feeling of permanent powerlessness. Their relationship with those they call "other" is experienced as exclusion. Their relation with their environment is increasingly less productive because poverty leaves no room for caring for the environment. Their relationship with the God who created them and sustains their life is distorted by an inadequate knowledge of who God is and what God wishes for all humankind. Poverty is the whole family of our relationships that are not all they can be. (Myers 1998, p13)*

While it is appreciated that some may hold a view that there are multiple causes of poverty, and no single root cause (OCMS Seminar, 16 July 2008), it clearly needs to be acknowledged that relationships play a critical part in the poverty equation, with some viewing it as the critical part.

### Scale of poverty

Whatever source of statistics one may take, the scale of the problem of poverty is evident. Even those statistics from governments and organizations attempting to promote the results of well-actioned poverty reduction efforts, show alarming figures. Figures, reflecting the most vulnerable suffering and dying, and widening inequality when economic development does occur. Women and children are at particular risk with 8 million children dying each year of poverty-related disease, 150 million children suffering from aggravated malnutrition (UNESCO 2005, p2) and a half a million women dying annual from preventable and treatable complications of pregnancy and childbirth (United Nations 2007, p4).

It is appreciated that many of the statistics gathered during this research are dated – albeit often reflecting the latest information from various sources. Also, as with all statistics, they need to be studied in context with the source and with a variety of qualifiers taken into account. However, without doubt, the statistics listed provide some idea of the magnitude of the challenge facing the world today, facing humankind today.

Guiding many multilateral, bilateral and civil society efforts are the eight United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set in 2000 with a target date of 2015 to achieve. The goals (United Nations 2008):

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

At the mid-point, 2007 it was clear that the MDG's would not all be achievable, without a massive scaling up of efforts. According to a UN report (United Nations 2007, p7), while progress has been made, almost 1 billion people (2004 figures) are still living in extreme poverty, with the headline news that the "the poorest are getting a little less poor in most regions". The report admitted that key challenges remained, in particular (United Nations 2007, p4,5):

- *Over half a million women still die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The odds that a woman will die from these causes in sub-Saharan Africa are 1 in 16 over the course of her lifetime, compared to 1 in 3,800 in the developed world.*
- *If current trends continue, the target of halving the proportion of underweight children will be missed by 30 million children, largely because of slow progress in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.*

- *The number of people dying from AIDS worldwide increased to 2.9 million in 2006, and prevention measures are failing to keep pace with the growth of the epidemic. In 2005, more than 15 million children had lost one or both parents to AIDS.*
- *Half the population of the developing world lack basic sanitation. In order to meet the MDG target, an additional 1.6 billion people will need access to improved sanitation over the period 2005-2015. If trends since 1990 continue, the world is likely to miss the target by almost 600 million people.*
- *To some extent, these situations reflect the fact that the benefits of economic growth in the developing world have been unequally shared. Widening income inequality is of particular concern in Eastern Asia, where the share of consumption of the poorest people declined dramatically between 1990 and 2004.*
- *Most economies have failed to provide employment opportunities to their youth, with young people more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed.*
- *Warming of the climate is now unequivocal. Emissions of carbon dioxide, the primary contributor to global climate change, rose from 23 billion metric tons in 1990 to 29 billion metric tons in 2004. Climate change is projected to have serious economic and social impacts, which will impede progress towards the MDGs.*

A more recent report issued by the World Bank, entitled “The developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty” revises the UN figure of below 1 billion people living in extreme poverty to 1.4 billion people or one quarter of the population of the developing world.

*The paper presents a major overhaul to the World Bank’s past estimates of global poverty, incorporating new and better data. Extreme poverty – as judged by what “poverty” means in the world’s poorest countries – is found to be more pervasive than we thought (Chen 2008, abstract).*

Where poverty reduction has been achieved, it has been accompanied by rising inequality. The benefits of economic growth in the developing world have been unequally shared, both within and among countries (United Nations 2007, p8). Three billion receive 1.2% of the world’s resources while one billion people living in rich countries receive 80%. A familiar story of the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer.

A useful source of poverty statistics, bringing together various sources can be found at [www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org) (Shah 2008).

### Financial resources to combat poverty

The various figures available on the additional amount of financial resources required to eradicate poverty tend to be in accord with one another – with estimates of around an additional \$60billion to \$80 billion a year.

- The UN (United Nations 1997) gives an estimate in the order of \$80 billion additional financial resources annually to provide basic social services to all developing countries.
- The World Bank (Devarajan 2002, p29) gives an upper figure of \$76 billion as the annual additional cost to achieve the social goals of poverty eradication in the areas of health, education and the environment.
- Brown, in an Earth Policy Institute document (Brown 2006) cites different sources to Devarajan (other than using World Bank education figures) and arrives at a similar figure:

## Working Document – Version 18 Jan 2009 (release 1.18)

*Additional Annual Funding Needed to Reach Basic Social Goals (Brown 2006, p140)*

<b>Goal</b>	<b>\$U.S. billions</b>
<i>Closing the condom gap</i>	2
<i>Eradication of adult illiteracy</i>	4
<i>Assistance to preschool children and pregnant women in 44 poorest countries</i>	4
<i>School lunch programs for 44 poorest countries</i>	6
<i>Reproductive health and family planning</i>	7
<i>Universal primary education</i>	12
<i>Universal basic health care</i>	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

There are generally a number of qualifiers for these figures and various conditions for success to come about, including: a need for a variety of policy reforms at international and national levels. Moreover there is an assumption that forces which often generate poverty or keep the poorest poor are addressed – forces such as individual and corporate corruption, human greed, and the quest for power.

To put the annual \$80 billion a year upper figure for poverty eradication into perspective, it is useful to compare it with spending in other areas:

<b>What the world prioritizes spend on</b>	<b>Approx year of data</b>	<b>Annually \$U.S. Billions</b>
Cosmetics in the USA (UNDP 1998, p37)	1997	8
Ice cream in Europe (UNDP 1998, p37)	1997	11
Perfumes in Europe and USA (UNDP 1998, p37)	1997	12
Spend on pets in USA (APPMA 2006)	2006	38
Alcoholic drinks in Europe (Anderson 2006, p47)	2003	150
EC farm subsidies (Brown 2006, p137)	2004	133
Global military spend (Stalenheim, 2007)	2006	1,204
<p>Sources:            Anderson, P. &amp; Baumberg, B. (2006) <i>Alcohol in Europe: a public health perspective</i>. London. Institute of Alcohol Studies.            APPMA (2006) <i>Pet spending at all time high</i>. Available at <a href="http://www.appma.org/press_releasedetail.asp?id=84">http://www.appma.org/press_releasedetail.asp?id=84</a> (last accessed 2 July 2008)            Brown, L.R. (2006) <i>Plan B2.0 rescuing a planet under stress and a civilisation in trouble</i>. New York, W.W. Norton and Co. Available at <a href="http://www.earth-policy.org/Books/PB2/Contents.htm">http://www.earth-policy.org/Books/PB2/Contents.htm</a> (last accessed 1 July 2008)            Stalenheim, P., Perdomo, C. &amp; Skons, E. (2007) "Chapter 8. Military expenditure". In Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2007) <i>SIPRI Yearbook 2007: armaments, disarmament and international security</i>. Oxford University Press. Available at <a href="http://yearbook2007.sipri.org/chap8">http://yearbook2007.sipri.org/chap8</a></p>		

(last accessed 1 July 2008)

UNDP (1998) Human Development Report. New York, Oxford. Oxford University Press

Moreover, a startling set of facts and figures have recently been released from a UK government-supported report on domestic food wasted in UK households (WRAP 2008). A staggering **£10 billion** (US\$20 billion) of food is thrown away by UK households each year! A sum of money that could sustain poverty reduction efforts beyond the hope of most governments and aid agencies. Indeed, if such wastage figures are indicative of other Western nations, then without doubt with just the utilization of savings in this one area – food we waste domestically - financial resources are potential available to eradicate poverty worldwide without any additional monetary demand on the people of the Western world or reduction in their living standards. Just a simple requirement for all responsible citizens to plan better the amount of food they buy and steward it well.

# Redemption

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## Introduction

To redeem means to “buy back”. The term was originally used with reference to the purchase of a slave’s freedom. Through the consequences of the Fall, creation finds itself in a condition of slavery, bondage to sin, with resultant problems of a decaying world, including problems of poverty.

God however, through his love of His creation (John 1:15-17), has redeemed all people, has purchased their freedom so that they are no longer bondage to sin. The cost of the redemption was God’s only Son, Jesus of Nazareth, who gave His life and was raised from death to make it possible for all people of all nations to be reconciled to God and thus have a right relationship with Him. The message is for everyone, the rich and the poor, people of other faiths and people of no faith, people who strive to do good and people with hardened hearts. God’s message of hope is wholly inclusive.

To be redeemed is to: be forgiven (Eph.1:7); to be reconciled to God (Gal 4:5; Col 1:18-20); to have eternal life (Rev.5:9-10); to be set apart (Rom.5:17); to be free from legalism and the bondage of sin (Gal 3:13; Titus2:14; 1 Pet1:14-18).

Redemption has thus provided the people of this world the opportunity for true freedom; the liberation of men, women and children from the slavery and bondage of the ways of the world, the recovery of a vision for things that are good, the release of those who feel exploited and downtrodden (cf: Luke 4:16-21). A freedom that has an eternal significance (1 John 5:11)

Redemption is used several times in the New Testament.

*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:13-14)*

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Ephesians 1:7, 8)*

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3: 23,24)*

*How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death... (Hebrews 9:14)*

While there may often be a New Testament focus on redemption, Old Testament scholars will point to the richness of God’s work in Exodus as a starting point to try and understand the depth and meaning of what happened on the Cross:

*How big is our understanding of redemption? Mission clearly has to do with the redemptive work of God and our participation in making it known and leading people into the experience of it. If as I am seeking to argue throughout this book, mission is fundamentally God’s before it is ours, what is God’s idea of redemption? The scope of our mission must reflect the scope of God’s mission, which in turn will match the scale of God’s redemptive work. Where do we turn in the Bible for our understanding of redemption? Already it will be clear enough that in my view it will simply not do to turn first to the New Testament. If you had asked a devout Israelite in the Old Testament period “Are you redeemed?” the answer would have been a most definite yes. And if you*

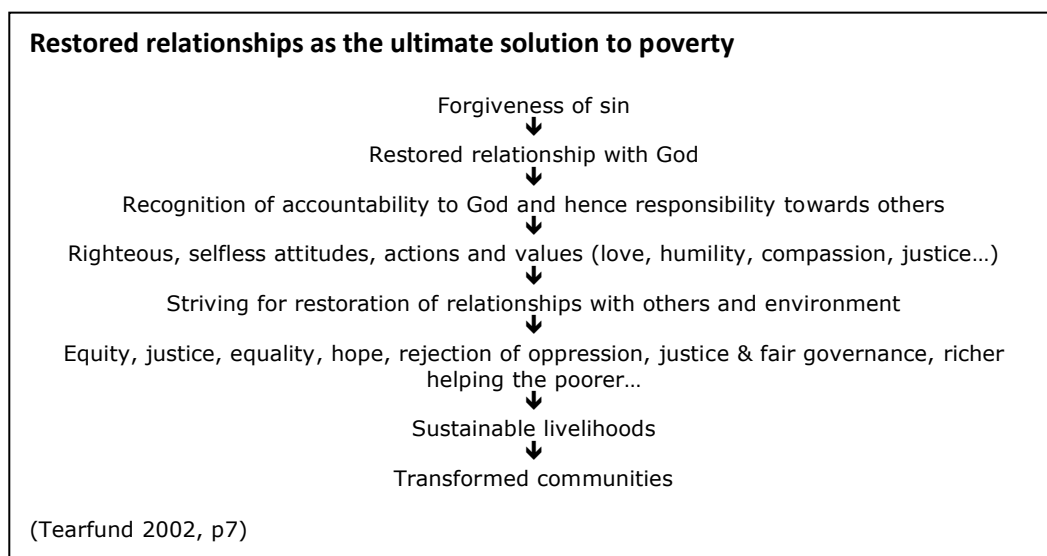
*had asked "How do you know?" you would be taken aside to sit down somewhere while your friend recounted a long and exciting story – the story of exodus... (Wright 2006, p265)*

God's redemption is not just personal but includes all the world – the environment.

*The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Romans 8:21)*

*If creation has suffered the consequences of human sin, it will also enjoy the fruits of human deliverance. When believers are glorified, creation's "bondage to decay" will be ended, and it will participate in the "freedom that belongs to the glory" for which Christians are destined. Nature, Paul affirms, has a future within the plan of God. It is destined not simply for destruction but for transformation. To be sure, this transformation is tightly bound to the future of God's own people; and the rest of Romans 8 focuses on the future of believers. These circumstances have led some interpreters to view the references to creation in vv. 19-22 as remnants of apocalyptic imagery that Paul uses solely to foster belief in the hope of human transformation. Certainly, Paul uses vv. 19-22 – to come back finally to our initial question – to explain the need for and nature of the "glory that will be revealed in us." However, without in the slightest taking away from the anthropological focus of Romans 8, vv. 19-22 must be allowed to make their own point. The reversal of the conditions of the Fall includes the created world along with the world of human beings. Indeed, the glory that humans will experience, involving as it does the resurrection of the body (8:9-11, 23), necessarily requires an appropriate environment for that embodiment. (Moo 2006, p 449-88)*

Thus, holding onto the idea that broken relationships are the cause of poverty, as outlined above, then the solution points to the reconciliation of relationships:



Such a concept shouldn't preclude traditional socio-economic approaches to poverty reduction, but complement them. Thus the approach is more integral, more holistic, going beyond just the physical.

## **Missio Dei - God's mission**

In the study of doctrine pertaining to the existence of the church (ecclesiology), a Latin phrase *missio Dei* was adopted and became increasingly popular during the last century to explain the relationship between God's mission and the call of the church to participate.

*The literature always mentions the term (missio Dei) in the same breath as the July 1952 Willingen meeting of the International Missionary Council, as the concept came into existence at that conference. Curiously, though, the expression itself was never used during the conference. It arose in the days and weeks following the Willingen conference in the report of the Württemberg prelate and former director of the Basle Mission, Karl Hartenstein. He created the term to summarize the main finding of the conference's closing statement, which said:*

*The missionary movement, of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God. ... We who have been chosen in Christ... are by these very facts committed to full participation in His redeeming mission. There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world-mission. (Richebächer 2003, p589)*

*The classical doctrine on missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world... Our mission has no life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission, not least since the missionary initiative comes from God alone. (Bosch 1991, p390)*

**Basically mission is God's mission** and it is a mission that goes beyond the church. It embraces everything that God is doing in the world through people and nations to establish His Kingdom here on earth – within the church and beyond the church. It is a mission that all Christians are called to participate and have an immense privileged to do so. Thus God's work is not limited to the endeavours of the church, but the church does have a special role, sent by God to continue in His mission.

*"It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church." There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. (Moltmann 1977, p64)*

*In sum, missio Dei is a comprehensive term encompassing everything God does in relation to the kingdom and everything the church is sent to do on earth. (Scott Moreau & Corwin 2003, p73)*

Central to the concept of *missio Dei* is that it is God-dependant rather than church-dependant. The church doesn't have a separate overriding mission or agenda – it is called to take part in what the Triune God has ordered, from the beginning. To make Himself known to all people and nations so that they may enjoy fullness of life as originally intended and as originally created:

*Missio Dei, is the idea that God is actively working to restore his creation to wholeness. This wholeness looks like Jesus and is our intended expression as human beings designed in the image of God. Because of the fall, humanity is disconnected from God...*

*God has been actively building His Kingdom on earth and calling individuals throughout history to participate in his ongoing mission. Jesus removed the barrier between humanity and God. Followers of Jesus seek to engage in this mission by creating an authentic community where each person's dignity can be restored, actively participate in God's Kingdom activities on earth... (Brink 2005)*

*...we have seen that the church exists not for its own sake but for the sake of God's cause in the world. That cause is the alienation from God and liberation from the oppression, deprivation, and suffering in which sin works itself out, so that human beings may dwell in God's shalom, where there is harmony and delight in all dimensions of existence. (Wolterstorff 1980, p13)*

In Michael W. Goheen's comprehensive examination of Leslie Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology, Goheen explains in the chapter "missio Dei as context for the church's missionary identity" (with reference to the International Missionary Conference held at Willingen, Germany in 1952):

*According to Willingen's "Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church" the church's mission is derived from the mission of the Triune God (Goodall 1953:188-192). There are two sides to this new emphasis:*

*First, mission is first and foremost God's mission. The church does not have a mission of its own. Rather the primary emphasis is on what God is doing for the redemption of the world. Thereafter, consideration is given to how the church participates in God's redeeming mission.*

*Second, God's mission is defined in terms of the Triune character and work of God.*

*Wilhelm Andersen comments on Willingen: "If we wish to sum up, with systematic precision, Willingen's approach to a theology of the missionary enterprise, we must say that it is Trinitarian in character. In the Willingen statements, the triune God Himself is declared to be the sole source of every missionary enterprise" (1955:47). H. H. Rosin concurred when he says that "the Trinitarian foundation of mission is one of the most striking achievements of this [Willingen] conference" (Rosin 1972:10).*

*In the Willingen statements, mission has its source in the nature and action of the Triune God. God is a missionary God and mission is first of all His action. The missionary initiative flows from the love of God to reconcile His created yet alienated world. He trod a long road of redemption with Israel, until out of the depths of His love the Father sent the Son to reconcile all things to Himself. Jesus accomplished the mission for which He was sent by a complete atonement in His death and resurrection. On the basis of this accomplished work God poured out the Spirit of Jesus to gather His people together into one body as a first fruit and an earnest of Christ's redemption. That same Spirit of Jesus equips and empowers His people to continue His mission as witnesses to God's redeeming love and work. Thus the church is caught up in God's redeeming action. Participation in Christ's redeeming work means participation in His mission to the world (Goodall 1954:189f.). It is clear in this summary statement that the mission of the church is derived from the redeeming action of God that flows from His love for the world. The Father sends the Son to accomplish His redemptive work; the Father and Son send the Spirit to incorporate his people into that redemption; the Son sends the church to continue his mission and to participate in the reconciling work of the Spirit. The mission is God's but He includes the church; the mission of the church is participation in the sending of God. (Goheen 2001, p117)*

In his excellent study on the mission of God, Christopher Wright writes:

*Mission, then, in biblical terms, while inescapably involves us in planning and action, is not primarily a matter of our activity or our initiative. Mission from the point of view of our human endeavour, means the committed participation of God's people in the purposes of*

*God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God's. The marvel is that God invites us to join in.* (Wright 2006, p67)

And the end result of this is the **glorification of the Triune God**:

*The Scriptures teach that "the end result of such missio Dei is the glorification of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."* (Peters 1972, p9)

*Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.* (English and Scottish Divines 1647)

*Creation exists not to serve human interests but to reflect the glory of God.* (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p48)

*...I am sure that nothing gives such strength to everything we have to do or bear as the simple witness of your own conscience, that your desire is in everything to glorify God. For so God has ordered it, that then are we efficient, and then are we happy, when His ends are our ends. The end always determines the course; and the secret of beginning well, and going on well, is, first, to choose rightly, and then to fix firmly in mind one great scope. There are many ends; and every end is again a means to a further end, until we arrive at one final end... that everything must terminate in "God's Glory."* (The Anglican Pulpit Library 1900, p1,2)

*Unless the quest for justice among the nations is guided by passion for the glory of God, and is rooted in what God has done for the world in Jesus Christ, it quickly becomes another form of domination. God's gracious, reconciling love in Jesus Christ towards us human beings is the ground and pattern for our response to injustice and conflict. This takes the righting of historic wrongs seriously, but the ultimate aim is the transformation of sinful men and women through their reconciliation to one another and to their Creator.* (Ramachandra 1999, p171)

*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.* (Psalm 86: 12)

*Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.* (Isaiah 60:21)

*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* (Romans 11:36)

*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.... Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 6:20, 31)

*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* (Revelation 4:11)

## **Missio Dei as applied to Christian organizations**

The *missio Dei* concept can also be applied as the context for the identity of a Christian organization, on the basis that the organization exists to fulfil God's mission – it is called to participate in the mission of God, in which the church has a particular standing. Such an application is helpful in defining a clear goal and purpose of a Christian organization, as clarity at these levels will guide the activities of the organization and subsequent outputs.

To illustrate such participation in God's mission, a logical framework has been used. It is appreciated that the logical framework as a management tool has its limitations, not least because even the most experienced of users find difficulties in applying it. However, it is a tool familiar to practitioners in the relief and development sector and does help to show the logic, rationale and linkages between what is wanted to be achieved and what is done to achieve it.

In order to present the framework, there is first a need to give a broad definition of vision (or goal) and mission (or purpose), namely (Wikipedia 2008):

- **Vision:** Defines where the person or organization wants to be in the future. It reflects the optimistic view of the future.
- **Mission:** Defines what is going on now, basically describing the purpose, why an organization exists. A mission statement provides a path to realize the vision.

Thus, with **God's Mission (*missio Dei*)** – *to restore all creation to wholeness; to reconcile all things to God through Christ Jesus so that everyone may, through the Holy Spirit, be one in God the Father and enjoy fullness of life.* Christian relief and development organizations have an invitation to participate, and can adopt the following logical framework to operate within:-

### **Organization's vision (or goal)**

To participate in God's mission to restore all creation to wholeness.

### **Organization's mission (or purpose)**

Faithful witness in word and deed to God's redeeming love and work.

### **Organization's activities and outputs**

Actions and the resultant products or services by the relief and development organization (or indeed any Christian, whatever their line of work or interest) will need to be designed as such to achieve purpose.

Consequently and in simplistic terms, should an activity not be achieving mission and thus not contributing to vision, however noble the activity or output may be, it falls outside the intended logic and rationale of what should be mission/vision driven.

It is not suggested that organizations should adopt, word-by-word, these higher vision and purpose statements. The goal and purpose of any particular organization should reflect that what it, as an organization, has set out to achieve. An organization may have a vision structured in what may be viewed as secular terms or Christian mission terms. Both are perfectly acceptable: with the proviso that whatever they may choose, they need to nest within and ultimately aim to contribute to, God's mission.

Arriving at some general resolution at activities, outputs, mission and vision levels will help determine *indicators*. Basically, how do you know when you have achieved what you set out to achieve?

## Indicators of achievement

Expanding on the above vision, mission and activities, *indicators of achievements* can be introduced. Moreover, while unconventional in the development of logical frameworks, possible warning signs – alerts – can also be included, if only to emphasise the positive. For further information and pointers to articles, various references to other parts of this paper are given.

When looking at indicators of achievement and possible warning signs, detail on what the organization could be doing in conventional thematic terms, outputs and services has *not* been included. Indicators along conventional lines are generally well-established and documented, and associated evaluations of project achievements are relatively straight-forward and accepted. The results of conventional evaluations are obviously critical to the organization and its supporters, but they often fail to embrace the wider undertaking of Christian relief and development work and its contribution to transformation.

*Where the aim is holistic transformation of the community, integral mission in all its Christian fullness, such changes though readily seen, are much more difficult to measure. Unfortunately, evaluators tend to measure those things which can be easily measured and ignore the more important factors that cannot. Hence the aims of the project itself can get distorted. More fundamentally still is the question of what we mean by 'development'.* (Woolnough 2008, pgs 134-143)

The more important matter is that whatever area of work the organization engages with – which is normally tied to its specific mandate, articles of association, memorandum of understanding and so forth – it seeks to participate in God's mission and adopts an appropriate framework of actions to reflect this.

*... mission is not primarily about going. Nor is mission primarily about doing anything. Mission is about being. It is about being a distinctive kind of people, a countercultural, multinational community among the nations.* (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p123)

*So all our missional efforts to make God known must be set within the prior framework of God's own will to be known. We are seeking to accomplish what God himself wills to happen. This is both humbling and reassuring. It is humbling inasmuch as it reminds us that all our efforts would be in vain but for God's determination to be known. We are neither initiators of the mission of making God known to the nations nor does it lie in our power to decide how the task will be fully accomplished or when it may be deemed to be complete. But it is also reassuring. For we know that behind all our fumbling efforts and inadequate communication stands the supreme will of the living God, reaching out in loving self-revelation, incredibly willing to open blind eyes and reveal his glory through the treasures of the gospel delivered in the clay posts of his witnesses (2 Cor 4:3:1-7).* (Wright 2006, p129,130)

*What kind of mission are we attempting to accomplish? Are we forging ahead using only human methods while leaving the biblical principles of mission behind? Incarnational mission requires sacrifice, humility, flexibility and love. If we omit these elements, we are not suitably engaged in God's mission.* (Ma 2005, p116)

Clear evidence is required that an organization is on the right track, that it is properly engaging in His mission, that it is seeking to accomplish His will. Without clear evidence, there can be no assurance – the organization will be open to challenge, and will likely go off course, especially when difficulties arise: more often following those who are in opposition, those who shout the loudest.

Organizations need some means of divine testing:

*... a test not of claims as such but of evidence on which valid claims could be made. We may put it like this, within the terms of the vision itself: a person may claim to possess every building skill and qualification, but the plumb-line applied to the wall will soon reveal whether that claim is valid or bogus. It must be exactly the same with the people of God: they may well claim every heavenly and spiritual blessing and qualification, but the plumb-line of divine testing applied to certain assessable aspects of their lives and persons will soon show with what reality that claim is made. (Motyer 1974, p161,162)*

Thus the evidence will be shown in the aspects of the lives of the people that make up the Christian organization, that form the church. In particular those who have authority, those who bear influence, those who have power and persuasion. The motive behind all they do must be one of love: love for God and love for all people in accordance with His Sovereign will. Thus, at the end of the day an organization's accomplishments will not be measured by the short-term results of its activities or by its longer-term outcomes. In contrast, **success will be measured in terms of an organization's striving to be right with God, to be in obedience to him.**

*It is perhaps good to remind ourselves that from God's perspective, we will be measured not in terms of outcomes but in terms of obedience. As Samuel reminds us: Obedience is better than sacrifice. (Vencer 2002, p52)*

*How can we be sure we are doing the right thing? Know the Father's Will – through prayer and meditation in the word of God. (So 2008)*

*The praise of the church is what energizes and characterizes it for mission, and also serves as the constant reminder that we so much need, that all our mission flows as obedient response to and participation in the prior mission of God. (Wright 2006, p134)*

*Because our role is to be faithful and obedient, in contrast to being successful, we must modify our ambitions and redirect our praise. (Myers 1998, p45)*

*Development is not an accelerated process of change but obedience to the Lord in stewardship of creation and love for neighbour empowered by the Holy Spirit. (Consultation report 1996, p395)*

And the alternative to obedience is disobedience. There is no middle ground – a Christian either obeys or disobeys. Christian organizations that are not submissive to His Spirit, will in the end separate themselves from God, they will become powerless and ineffective in His mission. Whilst the Sovereign and Almighty God will still use the organization to serve His purpose – the relationship will be one of divergence rather than partnership. Motyer (1974) looks at the example in the Book of Amos:

*"He turned to be their enemy" (Amos 3:9-15). We have forgotten that our God can turn and become our enemy (Is. 63:10) and with all our talk of taking care not to fall into the power of Satan we have become blind to the much more dangerous possibility of falling out of the power of God. We dismiss it, ignore it or forget it to our peril. Why ever is the individual believer powerless against his foes, or why is the whole church powerless? Is it because God has lost his power? No, but because we have lost His power. (Motyer 1974, p79)*

## Logical framework

	<b>Indicators of achievement</b>	<b>Alerts- warning signs</b>	<b>Page refs (click)</b>
<b>Vision/goal</b> To participate in God's mission to restore all creation to wholeness.	<i>Gods mission - falls outside scope of conventional measurement</i>		
<b>Mission/purpose</b> Faithful witness in word and deed to God's redeeming love and work	Organization's staff, supporters and partners revealing a new way of living and working, according to kingdom ways and values.		42
	Organization's staff, supporters and partners involved in action bearing witness to God's redeeming love.		
<b>Activities and outputs</b> Actions and the resultant products or services by the relief and development organization	A growing, vibrant local church engaging with their community in social action and witnessing to the Triune God.	A tendency to grow a local or international NGO presence, which is outworking its own relief and development programmes through the local church or others.	13 60
	People of other faiths and no faith having a greater awareness of God's presence.	Steering clear of societies and nations where the church isn't particularly active or present.	53
	Staff and partners taking courageous and prophetic stands against greed and corruption.		19
	Selfless concern for all people of all faiths and no faith, showing favour to the poor and marginalized.		46 53
	A local church stewarding its resources (however little) to good and transparent effect.	A local church dependent on foreign funds for basic existence.	43 39 60
	An empowered local church and community.	A local church and community disempowered, especially when bypassed, however urgent the poverty response or need.	63
	Viewing obedience to God as a measure of success.	Focussing on outcomes and results as a measure of success.	34 63
	Keeping focussed on vision, the best – even though it may mean missing "opportunities".	Responding to opportunities that look good, at expense of vision.	36
	Having a balanced approach to seeking the kingdom present and the kingdom future.	Having a focus on one aspect at the expense of the other.	13 40 68
	Recruiting personnel, prioritizing a person's relationship with God.	Recruiting of personnel prioritizing a person's qualifications, skills and experience in relief and development.	55 59 42 19 16 50 18
	Acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is at work at all times. That we are dealing with the visible and invisible.	Having a tendency to avoid the spiritualization of things.	18 19
	Engaging with and strengthening the local church wherever it exists, however weak or in need of transformation.	Viewing the local church as an obstacle.	63 42
	View witness of God as an essential component of all activities	Seeing witness as an option.	42 48
Recognizing that God works within His church and beyond His church.	To consider the presence of a local church as a pre-condition to operate in.	53	

	Seeking and building upon God's presence in other faiths and secular situations. Recognizing that Jesus of Nazareth has gone before us, and God is present in all societies, in all situations.	Viewing other faiths and secular situations as a display of God's absence.	53
	Strategizing and planning as at war with exigency	Strategizing and planning as in peace time, with vacillation.	64
	Involving personnel from the front line in strategy and planning of all aspects of organization's life	Making plans and then seeking verification and support from those at the sharp end.	57 58
	Recognizing that faith in itself can lift people out of poverty	Seeing poverty reduction largely in economic terms.	60
	Viewing persecution and challenges as positive indicators of achievement.	Viewing troubles as failure and avoid risks.	44
	Viewing adverse conditions and evil as permitted by a Sovereign God	Seeing evil as an authority outside God's control and achievement of purpose.	45
	Acknowledgement that however little God provides, it will always be enough.	Seeking increasing resources as a means to accomplishment.	36 42
	Having an open mind on working with public monies and other secular sources of funding.	Avoiding certain funding streams through preconceptions	41
	Working while at prayer – an attitude of prayer in all things.	Praying while at work – a top and tail prayer attitude to guide and bless the things that are done.	65
	Praying with urgency and expectation	Taking a casual approach to prayer – without resolve.	64

## Seeking the best

When developing and outworking strategy, it is easy to be diverted from the goal/vision. Christian relief and development organizations often struggle with the tension between seeking the “New Jerusalem” here on earth, and the Kingdom of God. The resultant NGO strategy to reduce poverty is thus frequently orientated toward the organization outworking its mission through human endeavors, that is to say what is achievable by them, rather than a statement orientated toward God outworking His mission (*missio Dei*) through the organization.

*Forcing "Jerusalem" to happen: The greatest temptation to evil that humanity ever suffers is the temptation to make "Jerusalem" to happen by human means. Human means are absolutely indispensable in the world as it is. That is God's intention. We are supposed to act, and our actions are to count. But there is a limit on what human arrangements can accomplish. These alone cannot change the heart and spirit of the human being. Because of this, the instrumentalities invoked to make "Jerusalem" happen will always wind up eliminating truth, or mercy, or both. World history as well as small-scale decision making demonstrates this. It is seen in the ravages of dictatorial power, on the one hand, and, on the other, in the death by minutiae that a bureaucracy tends to impose. It is well known how hard it is to provide a benign order within human means. For the problem, once again, is in the human heart. Until it fully engages with the rule of God, the good that we feel must be cannot come. It will at a certain point be defeated by the very means implemented to produce it. Gods' way of moving towards the future is, with gentle persistence in unyielding purpose, to bring about the transformation of the human heart by speaking with human beings and living with and in them. (Willard 1998)*

Temptation to do something different and what seems good comes in many forms. It can especially come with: an offer of financial assistance or other resources; an opening for power and authority; or in response to a genuine call from those in need. Jesus of Nazareth was in this position during the Temptation (Luke 4:1-13). He was offered the chance to do away with hunger – at a command he could have turned stone to bread. This was something that the people were hoping of God. Jesus of Nazareth was also offered the opportunity to rule all nations – a world where perfect justice would have ruled with no more injustice or persecution by the Romans in authority. These events would have brought to fruition what his followers and supporters of were waiting for, were anticipating: it would have been seen as an answer to the prayers and calls of many, especially the poor, the oppressed, the most vulnerable in society.

Yet Jesus of Nazareth turned these down, things that looked good but were temporal and not of the Triune God's mission. Christ Jesus chose the Cross, a choice that was considered by those closest around him as a disaster at the time, a time of utter despair, but turned out to be the greatest hope for all humanity, for all creation.

The dilemma of going for something that is good which may usurp the best, is powerfully presented in Caird's (1963) commentary on Luke, and copied in the abstract below:

*The temptations of Jesus are the sequel to his baptism. Conscious of a unique vocation and endowed with exceptional powers, he must set aside all unworthy interpretations of his recent experience. He has heard a voice saying, "Thou art my Son"; now he hears another voice, "If you are the Son of God...", and he must decide whether or not it comes from the same source. Three times he makes up his mind that the voice which prompts him to action is that of the devil.*

*For many modern readers the mention of the devil invests the story with an air of unreality and even of superstition. Let us grant that the devil is a mythological figure. But myth is not to be confused with legend or fairy-tale. Myth is a pictorial way of expressing truths which cannot be expressed so readily or so forcefully in any other way; and there are at least five such truths which are safeguarded by belief in a devil. (1) Evil is real and potent. It is not just the sum total of individual bad deeds, but a power which gets a grip on human life and society. (2) Evil is personal. The very distinction between good and evil can arise only where there is free choice to obey God or to rebel against him. (3) Evil is distorted good. In a world which God has created good, evil exists only by perverting the good gifts of God. The devil himself is a fallen angel. (4) Evil masquerades as good. The devil is the "slanderer" who misleads men by telling them lies about God. (5) Evil is the enemy. The armchair sociologist may tell us that certain deplorable types of human behaviour are "normal", because they occur regularly in his statistical surveys; but those who love the people concerned know better.*

*But can a good man really be exposed to temptation like the rest of us? The man who turns back at his garden gate knows nothing of the strength of the gale in comparison with the man who battles his way through to his destination; and he whose destination is on the mountain tops knows more than others. Even so, the good man who resists temptation knows more about its power than the weakling who submits to its first onset; and the saint knows most of all. It is unlikely that Jesus ever felt any temptation to do the things which are commonly regarded as immoral or antisocial. But that does not mean that his temptations were the less real or the less powerful. All temptation is to do what is attractive, and the subtlest and strongest temptation is to do what appears to be good. The strength of a temptation is in proportion to the attractiveness of the goal. A man of fervent and dedicated spirit, feeling himself called to liberate the oppressed and to establish the reign of justice and peace, would be open to three types of temptation: to allow the good to usurp the place of the best, to seek God's ends by means alien to God's character, and to force God's hand by taking short cuts to success. And these are the three temptations of Jesus.*

*Jesus was hungry: by experience he discovered what hunger can do to a man, forcing his attention ever to the immediate and material need and dulling his senses to all the higher claims of life; and he learned sympathy with the multitudes who lived on intimate terms with hunger. Yet did not God provide for his children? Was it not his will that they should be fed? Would it not be proper for the Messiah to give full rein to his compassion and devote himself to meeting this most clamant of all human needs? The Messiah was indeed expected to give bread from heaven, as Moses had done long ago (John6:30); and to a nation accustomed to privation the most popular picture of the messianic age was a great Banquet (Isa. 26:6-8),. It is good to feed the hungry, but for the Messiah, as for others, the good can be the enemy of the best. To give priority to man's physical needs is to strip him of his dignity and make him one of the beasts that perish.*

*Next, in ecstatic and imaginative vision, Jesus is caught up into the air (the matter-of-fact Matthew has him ascend a mountain) to see stretched out beneath him the kingdoms of the world which God has given him as his inheritance (Ps 2:8). They are his by right, but how are they to become his in fact? Over all this territory imperial Caesar reigns. What could Jesus not achieve were he on Caesar's throne? How simple then would be his task of world-wide mission! Among the Jews there was a party known as the Zealots who expected the Messiah to be a conqueror who would lead them in a war of liberation, and there were scriptures which endorsed their view (Ps 2:9, Zech 12:7-9). Were they perhaps the practical men, the realists who would get results while the visionary was still dreaming his dreams? It is good to be realistic, but the greatest reality is God, and true realism is to believe that only God's purpose is worth striving for and only God's methods can achieve it. The devil claims that all worldly power has been delivered to him, and Jesus does not dispute his claim to be able to give it to whom he will; but he cannot receive this power at the devil's hands. He has come in the name of God to wrest it out of the devil's keeping (see Luke11: 14-23). The paths of this world do not lead to the kingdom of God, and to pin one's faith to worldly wisdom or authority is to worship that which is not God. To worship God is to trust him and leave the results in his hands.*

*But how can men be made to recognize the efficacy of such faith? Still in the same spiritual exaltation Jesus imagines himself on the pinnacle of the Royal Porch of the Jerusalem temple, overlooking the sheer drop of the 450 feet to the Kidron valley below. All things are possible to him who believes. If he were to cast himself from the pinnacle, could he not trust God to bring him safe to the ground and so to provide spectacular proof of the power of faith, which would compel men's assent? But to test God is the opposite of trusting him. He who asks for proof has not learnt the meaning of faith.*

*Each of these three temptations attacked Jesus not at a point of weakness but at his greatest strength – his compassion, his commitment, his faith. In each case he recognized that he was dealing not with God's will but with the wiles of the devil. Each of the devil's proposals he rebutted by a quotation from Deuteronomy, finding a parallel to his own experience in the trials of Israel in the wilderness (Deut 8:3, 6:13, 6:16). Reminded of the divine authority with which he has been endowed, he replies by asserting his humanity: "If you are the Son of God...", "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone." "He puts himself under the authority of scripture and so under the authority of God. His role is to worship and serve – to be, in fact, the Servant of the Lord.*

*Luke tells us that the devil departed from Jesus for the time being. Jesus had won an initial victory, but these same temptations were to recur throughout his ministry. The insistent demands upon his compassion, the enthusiasm that would make him a national hero, the suspicion that required a sign from heaven – all this was to end only with the mocking cry, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" (Luke 23:37). (Caird 1963)*

Interestingly, the things that Jesus of Nazareth was tempted with would also meet the physical goals and aspirations of the many relief and development organizations and other aid agencies of the world, and indeed satisfy the poor. It would have resulted in a world without hunger and a world with perfect rule and justice. But it would also have been a world where people would have had no

future hope beyond the present, where death would have had the ultimate victory. Jesus of Nazareth defeated death on the Cross, once and for all.

## Evangelism, transformation and integral mission

### Introduction

Evangelism may be described as the proclamation of the Gospel message in word and deed, in an honest and loving way, so that those who receive the message may accept it, reject it or ignore it. Thus the action is proclamation, in both word and deed: and the message is the news of God's saving activity in the person and work of Christ. That through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people have an opportunity to have a right relationship with God.

There are numerous other definitions for evangelism – it is not intended to debate the various descriptions, but to promote one particular reflection that embraces the concept of what is commonly called *integral mission*, or *transformation*, or *holistic mission*.

At the *International congress on World Evangelism in Lausanne in 1974*, evangelism was defined as:

*"The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world".*

The whole gospel includes the well known part of proclaiming God by word - the church is good at this aspect. The whole gospel also includes proclamation by deed - personal witness - feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and needy, making a stand for justice. The church needs more opportunities and encouragement to engage in this. Thus evangelism, for the purposes of this research, is viewed as bringing together in a seamless way the spiritual and physical, divine action and social action. Evangelism involves witnessing:

*Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do. This is the way Jesus began his evangelistic ministry according to the synoptic gospels. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15). Evangelism is announcing that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour and Liberator. In this Jesus, incarnate, crucified and risen, the reign of God has been inaugurated. Evangelism thus includes the "gospel events". It is, essentially, not a call to put something into effect, as if God's reign would be inaugurated by our response or thwarted by the absence of such a response. It is a response to what God has already put into effect. In light of this, evangelism cannot be defined in terms of its results or effectiveness, as though evangelism has only occurred where there are "converts". Rather, evangelism should be perceived in terms of its nature, as mediating the good news of God's love in Christ that transforms life, proclaiming by word and action, that Christ has set us free. (Bosch 1991, p412,413)*

Others have used similar terms, including transformational development and integral mission, with resultant explanations and descriptions:

*I use the term transformational development to reflect my concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially and spiritually . . . Changed people and just and peaceful relationships are the twin goals of transformation . . . Changed people are those who have discovered their true identity as children of God and who have*

*recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all. (Myers 1998, p3 & 14)*

*" .. the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task." Extract from the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission developed by those present at the Micah consultation on Integral Mission held in Oxford during September 2001.*

The above speaks of integral mission, yet many writers have presented clear and certain perceptions of mission in terms of evangelism and social action – the spiritual and the physical - being separate, and with good argument that the spiritual side – evangelism – to be prioritized, or at least seen as primary (Paulus 1990, Wright 2006, Hauerwas 1980). Such arguments are not necessarily in conflict with the integral mission concept, since if you do treat them as separate then naturally separate elements can be prioritized, and if you are going to prioritize then evangelism will always be at forefront, since it introduces the essential eternal factor, whereas social action without Christian witness or the spiritual component, will always be temporal.

Integral mission effectively explains evangelism to include social action, and for social action to include evangelism: for the spiritual component to embrace the physical and vice versa. Thus the idea with integral mission is that you can't separate the spiritual from the physical. It is not a case of combining these two aspects of mission as you would do when integrating something, but that they are integral, cannot be separated. Since the two can't be separated, then neither can be prioritized. To prioritize one aspect is to first set it apart; to set something apart it must be separable. With integral mission the physical and spiritual are inseparable.

Of course *actions* associated with the physical and spiritual can be separated, but when this happens, it is not integral mission. Many organizations are solely involved in physical actions of reducing poverty and many churches are solely involved in spiritual actions in reaching the poor – but this is not integral mission. A number are doing both, but prioritize one aspect or the other – but this is not integral mission.

There have been a number of analogies presented to embrace the physical and spiritual concept of integral mission or holistic mission such as two blades of a pair of scissors, the wings of a bird, or a Pastor in Nairobi, Kenya, used the analogy of an airplane to explain the concept of holistic ministry:

*He said that a plane requires two wings to fly. One wing is not more important than the other. Likewise, preaching the message of salvation should not take precedence over acts of compassion to people in need. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p60)*

A church or an organization that is engaging in just one aspect or the other will always be incomplete – it will ultimately fail the people.

*Social action without evangelism. To think that social action is all there is to mission, while failing to lead people to the knowledge, worship and service of God in Christ, is to condemn those whom we may, in one way or another, "lead out of slavery" to repeat the*

*history of Israel... Evangelism without social action. But on the other hand, to think that spiritual evangelism is all there is to mission, is to leave the people vulnerable in other ways that are also mirrored in Israel. "Spiritual evangelism" means that the gospel is presented only as a means of having your own sins forgiven and having assurance of a future with God in heaven – without either the moral challenge of walking with personal integrity in the world of social, economic and political society around us, or the missional challenge of being actively concerned for issues of justice and compassion for others. (Wright 2006, p286)*

*If in mission today we stress the spiritual aspects of the gospel without the social, we lose all relevance in modern society. But if we stress the social without the spiritual, we lose reality altogether. The ultimate factor in the churches engagement with modernity is the churches engagement with God. (Guinness 1999)*

*There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom which is God's promise to the poor on the earth. There is here a double credibility test: proclamation that does not hold forth the promises of the justice of the kingdom to the poor of the earth is a caricature of the gospel; but Christian participation in the struggles for justice which does not point towards the promises of the kingdom also make a caricature of a Christian understanding of justice. (World Council of Churches 1983)*

This may hold particular challenges for Christian relief and development organizations that work:

- in environments where spiritual evangelism is viewed with distaste or hostility; or
- where financial supporters – Christian or non-Christian - of the work, may expressively forbid *evangelism* in its conventional sense.

With regard to the latter, in some circles there continues debate on whether a church or organization can truly be involved in integral mission when working on, for example a European Union-supported relief project, or a USAID-supported development programme, in which cases the donor forbids the recipient to “evangelise” or “proselytize” with public monies. However, if the concept of integral mission is accepted, then the reassuring truth is that whatever the source of money to fund the project, if social action is being conducted through the church with a genuine witness to Christ then evangelism is there – it can't be separated out and excluded.

This is of course quite different from the “evangelism” understanding of the multilateral and bilateral donor. Their concern is directed at using public monies for spiritual activities or directly promoting a particular faith or philosophy – donor conditions of course that need to be upheld and respected if you are engaged with such funding. But what the church does under these situations in terms of witness activity is no different from other faiths-based organizations or secular organizations. All civil society organizations, whether national or international, whether faith-based or not, witness to something. The corporate and individual witness of some secular relief and development organizations and its staff may be to values that can be creditable to some, or offensive to others – but they witness nevertheless, and are often recipients of tremendous sums of international aid. The corporate and individual witness of the church and its members of values grounded in Christ Jesus may be praiseworthy to some, or indeed confrontational to others, but they witness nevertheless. In all these cases you witness to something – and this witness is present irrespective of the source of funding.

*Everyone believes in something, and what we believe in shapes what we do and how we do it. This is no less true for those who are concerned for the poor and wish to help the poor on their development journey. The ideological center is a matter of faith, whether we are Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, agnostic, or atheist. These core values and beliefs are where we get our understanding of who we are and what we are for. These guiding*

*principles shape our understanding of what a better human future is and how we should get there. (Myers 1998, p3)*

A church witnessing to its values and beliefs, indeed any faith-based or secular organization witnessing to its values and beliefs, will encounter a mixture of acceptance, rejection and indifference – but these are consequences of witness and not its intention:

*People are also attracted to Pentecostal churches because of the neighbourly love they see expressed, both formally and informally. The new face of Pentecostalism is the social ministries that churches are launching in response to a holistic understanding of the Christian faith. While these acts of mercy and compassion typically are not explicitly intended to attract new converts, they are clearly affecting the perception of Pentecostal identity. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p24)*

Finally, it is contended that integral mission can be seen as the church being who she should be and doing what she should do - irrespective of external influences; disregarding promises of financial assistance and project support; putting aside intervention. The church is not in some competitive fixture to win external support in the fight against poverty and injustice; the church is not there in the midst of the vulnerable to gain international favour, nor fame, nor fortune. The church, with all her weaknesses and failings, with all her resource limitations, but in the immeasurable strength of the God she believes in, is simply doing what she is called to do.

*Integral mission flows out of an integral gospel and an integrated people. There is a great danger that we transform the mission of the church into a set of special 'projects' and 'programs', whether we call them 'evangelism' or 'socio-political action', and then look for ways to integrate these methodologically. Rather, the mission of the church is located in the adequacy and faithfulness of its witness to Christ. Our core business is neither the take-over of the world's systems nor the maximising of church membership.*

*Moreover, we need to remember that the primary way the church acts upon the world is through the actions of its members in their daily work and their daily relationships with people of other faiths. A congregation with huge social welfare projects or many 'church-planting' teams may be far less effective in secular society than congregations which have none of these things but train their members to obey Christ in the different areas of civic life into which they are called.*

*'Integral mission' has to do with this basic issue of the integrity of the church's life, the consistency between what the church is and what it proclaims. On this understanding, what makes an 'evangelical' politician truly 'evangelical' is not that he adds gospel preaching onto his daily political activities, to make the latter more 'holistic'; but rather that his political outlook and agenda are profoundly shaped by a vision and values that spring out of the Evangel (for instance, defending the most vulnerable- whether unborn children, the mentally disabled, cultural minorities or downtrodden tribal groups, working for ethnic reconciliation, and so on). (Ramachandra 2006)*

### **The central role of witness**

Witness is perhaps the most key aspect in the life and work of a Christian organization and its people. Witness points the way to God. Witness has been described as the first form of evangelism. If the *ultimate goal* of Christian mission is to make God known to all people and nations so that they may have an opportunity to enjoy fullness of life as God intended, then personal and corporate witness to the living God is the means to do so. Witness also means giving an honest reflection of what you understand, believe and personally live out – you cannot give a truthful and sustaining witness to something you are not.

*Now the primary responsibility of a witness is to tell what they know. Herein, then, lies the huge responsibility of knowing God... YHWH entrusts his uniqueness and universality to the witness of his people. How will the rest of the world come to know these great truths about YHWH? This essentially missiological question receives the remarkable answer that YHWH entrusts his intention for the nations to the witness of his own people. (Wright 2006, p62,63)*

*The first form of evangelization is witness. People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the "witness" par excellence (Rv 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. Jn 15:26-27).*

*The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who, despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of transcendent realities. But everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary.*

*The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity toward the poor, the weak and those who suffer. The complete generosity underlying this attitude and these actions stands in marked contrast to human selfishness. It raises precise questions which lead to God and to the Gospel. A commitment to peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed toward integral human development.*

*Christians and Christian communities are very much a part of the life of their respective nations and can be a sign of the Gospel in their fidelity to their native land, people and national culture, while always preserving the freedom brought by Christ. Christianity is open to universal brotherhood, for all men and women are sons and daughters of the same Father and brothers and sisters in Christ.*

*The Church is called to bear witness to Christ by taking courageous and prophetic stands in the face of the corruption of political or economic power; by not seeking her own glory and material wealth; by using her resources to serve the poorest of the poor and by imitating Christ's own simplicity of life. The Church and her missionaries must also bear the witness of humility, above all with regard to themselves—a humility which allows them to make a personal and communal examination of conscience in order to correct in their behaviour whatever is contrary to the Gospel and disfigures the face of Christ. (Paulus 1990, sections 42 & 43)*

*The testimony of Israel concerning Yahweh is always of two kinds, one to reorder the internal life of the community in ways faithful to Yahweh, the other to invite the world out beyond this community to reorder its life with reference to Yahweh. Both enterprises are preoccupied with the recognition that the acknowledgement of Yahweh at the center of life (the life of Israel or the life of the world) requires a reordering of everything else. (Brueggemann 1997, p747)*

*For the command to witness is not based on the assumption that we are in possession of a universal truth which others must be shown they already "implicitly" possess or have sinfully rejected. If such a truth existed then we would not be called upon to be witnesses, but philosophers. Rather the command to be a witness is based on the presupposition that we only come to the truth through the process of being confronted by the truth.*

*The command to be a witness does not entail a priori judgments about the beliefs and life of others—e.g., what is right or wrong with Hinduism or Islam—though such judgments after time may be appropriate. Rather, witness is derived from no other source than "look what manner of life has been made possible among us by the power of the cross and resurrection of Christ." The invitation to join such a life is made, not on the assumption*

*that there is something wrong with the others' beliefs, but because we are all sinners, and through participation in this community we have the possibility of finding redemption. We are not a sinner because we are a Hindu, Muslim, secularist, or Christian, but because like all people we live as though we can be our own creator and redeemer.*

*In the terms used above, therefore, the task of Christians is to be the sort of people and community that can become a real option and provide for real confrontation for others. Unless such a community exists, then no real option exists. (Hauerwas 1980, p71)*

*In the first place, the church is called to bear witness to what is to be seen with eyes and heard with ears – namely, God's mighty deeds in the cause of renewal. Peter made this clear in the first Christian sermon – Acts 2:22-24. (Wolterstorff 1980, p10,11)*

*For the church to engage society towards transformation, the church must inculcate in the laity a biblical worldview. This will be the most significant paradigm shift in the life and mission of the church today... The model of transformation must begin in the church and present the message – in word and deed – to society. (Vencer 2002)*

*Probably the most famous definition of all bears out this sense of passing on a life-giving piece of news: "Evangelism is witness. It is one beggar telling another beggar where to get food." (Niles cited by Kirk 1999, p60)*

*Christian witness is a never-ending interplay of repentance and remembrance, condemnation and celebration, proclamation and practice. Word and deed are held together, above all, in the formation of a multicultural community of men and women that is growing into the likeness of the True Human. The world does not set the agenda for the church (pace some ecumenical theologies), nor does the church set the agenda for the world. Rather, the church, as the body of the risen Christ, is the agenda for the world. It is the eschatological community, modelling a different understanding of humanness, embodying both the indictment of the world and its eternal hope. It is here that the redemption of our humanity is taking place. The church influences the world most when it seeks to be truly church, and not a political or evangelistic organization. If we want to discern God's purposes for the nations, it is not at the "blood-stained face of history" that we look, but at a blood-stained cross. The latter reveals a God whose will is nothing less than the formation of Christ in us: the healing of a fractured humanity and the glorification of a spoiled creation. Compared to this, every other vision of the world appears bleak, narrow, escapist or simply sick. (Ramachandra 1999, p171)*

The witness to Jesus Christ needs to be obvious and transparent - in truth, in love and in faith. A witness that is out of sight is not a true witness, a witness that contains falsehoods is not a true witness, a witness that is motivated by things other than love is not a true witness, a witness that is out of loyalty to the organization rather than out of faith is not a true witness.

There are many situations that may deter an organization from witnessing. The more obvious stem from a real concern for the safety of people, and for the security of the programmes. In the process and action of witness there may be a fear of:

- being misunderstood;
- rejection;
- oppression and persecution;
- closure of programmes; and
- physical and personal loss.

These may be valid reasons, but ultimately they cannot defend a non-witness stance. Witness by its very nature will entail risks, witness may mean making sacrifices, witness may mean suffering –

interestingly, one derivative of witness is from the Greek word “martyrs” - martyr (Douglas 1962, p1335). Situations demanding that Christians give everything have been confronted by believers throughout history, starting with the early Christians who underwent indescribable torture and put to death for their witness and confession of faith. Christians are called to be an authoritative witness in the knowledge that God has gone before them and will continue to lead them and be with them - whatever the uncertainties, whatever the reservations. Suffering is not incompatible with the glory of God (John11: 40):

*For the Christian, dialogue is a fundamental aspect of bearing witness to the truth of Christ... All witness, and thus all true dialogue, is a risky undertaking. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also (2 Cor. 12: 26). It is not the missionary who carries Jesus to others; on the contrary, it is the crucified and risen Jesus who leads us in our witness into places where we fear to venture. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p198)*

*Jesus changed history through his suffering – much more than through his miracles. ... The sign of Christian development and social change is not the New Jerusalem but the cross... Isn't it easier to see blessings and success as signs of belonging to that final kingdom? Isn't it easier to see demonstration of the kingdom's presence in miracles and other events beyond our control? Isn't it easier to identify right entirely with our cause and to go forward in an uncompromising crusade? It is much more difficult to see God at work in suffering, in a situation that is ambiguous and provisional because of our involvement. Yet we have the promise that just because God is in it this work is not ultimately futile. (Samuel & Sugden 1999, p190,191)*

*We were challenged to follow Jesus' footsteps, remembering that His compassion led Him to death (John 13: 12-17; Phil. 2:6-8; 1 John 3:11-18). (Wheaton statement 1983, section 27)*

*Mission never has progressed without suffering or martyrdom. (Scott Moreau 2007, p146)*

*...the church is called to serve all human beings everywhere, working and praying for healing, liberation, and fulfilment in all of life – in politics, in science, in social structures, in technology, in art, in recreation – willing undergoing sacrifice and suffering where necessary. (Wolterstorff 1980, p11)*

*So our mission on God's earth is not only authorized by its true owner, it is also protected, nurtured and guaranteed by him. We go in his name. We act on his authority. There is no place for dualism either. We know of course that the Bible also affirms that the evil one exercises a kind of lordship and power over the earth. But he does not own it. His claim to do so, and to have the right to give it to those who worship him was exposed as fraudulent by Jesus in his wrestling with temptation in the wilderness. Whatever authority Satan exercises is usurped and illegitimate, provisional and subject to the final limits set by the earth's true owner and Lord, the Lamb who reigns from the throne of God (Rev 4-7). (Wright 2006, p404)*

*We must also emphasize that Christian mission leads us again and again to the foot of the cross: all Christian mission must be shaped by the cross; the cross must never be behind us, but always in front of us. For this reason, we have drawn attention again and again to mission from the underside, to the connection between mission and suffering and even martyrdom, and to the importance of mission out of weakness, which has always been the way mission has been conducted through most of the history of the church. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p13)*

*In Father Xavier's view, it is relatively easy to be a Christian but much more difficult to follow Christ, because the latter path, in his view, is to be willing to die for those who are voiceless and oppressed. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p180)*

*In 1989 my wife and I walked in a park in Beijing with a Christian Chinese professor who had been exiled for 22 years to the far north of China, only being released soon after his wife had died. "One should not speak evil of Communists," he said. "When you open your mouth you should bear witness to God," Repeatedly the good news has been spread by those on the underside, those of no account, those who have been despised, underestimated and rejected: Filipina housemaids in the Gulf; Sudanese refugees in other parts of Africa; black students in Russia or China; and by the Western churches who are again being pushed to the margins of society. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p141,142)*

Whatever reason offered for non-witness, however logical and reasonable from a relief and development standpoint - the activity undertaken or service offered, no longer fits with integral mission. The work becomes indistinguishable from that undertaken by other organizations – whilst it may be worthy, of extreme value, of import in poverty reduction efforts, it cannot be called integral mission, since it excludes the essential component of Christian witness.

The problem of true witness often surfaces when working with other faiths, but witness in these situations is still called for, whatever the cost and even if it leads to so called “failure” from a human perspective:

*To all peoples, in spite of difficulties: the mission ad gentes faces an enormous task, which is in no way disappearing. Indeed, both from the numerical standpoint of demographic increase and from the socio-cultural standpoint of the appearance of new relationships, contacts and changing situations the mission seems destined to have ever wider horizons. The task of proclaiming Jesus Christ to all peoples appears to be immense and out of all proportion to the Church's human resources.*

*The difficulties seem insurmountable and could easily lead to discouragement, if it were a question of a merely human enterprise. In certain countries missionaries are refused entry. In others, not only is evangelization forbidden but conversion as well, and even Christian worship. Elsewhere the obstacles are of a cultural nature: passing on the Gospel message seems irrelevant or incomprehensible, and conversion is seen as a rejection of one's own people and culture...*

*Internal and external difficulties must not make us pessimistic or inactive. What counts, here as in every area of Christian life, is the confidence that comes from faith, from the certainty that it is not we who are the principal agents of the Church's mission, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit. We are only co-workers, and when we have done all that we can, we must say: "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty" (Lk 17:10). (Paulus 1990, sections 35 & 36)*

*We acknowledge and affirm that authentic witness to Jesus Christ should be carried out in a spirit of respect for the beliefs and devotion of others. It can never simply be "telling" but also be a sensitive "listening". It must, furthermore, always respect the freedom of others and should not be coercive or seductive in any way. We acknowledge that God has not left himself without witness anywhere (Acts 16:17) and we joyfully recognize a knowledge of God, a sense of the transcendent, among many human communities including many faith-communities. (Stuttgart consultation 1987 p286)*

*In our service to those of other faiths we must speak quietly, by life as well as by word. But a civilized society is not one in which there is no permission to speak in the public square of those beliefs which affect us most deeply. A civilized society is one in which courtesy, politeness, respect and hospitality are extended to the views and experiences of our fellow-citizens and we are free to express with enthusiasm and eagerness the good news we have discovered in Jesus Christ. It is not a society where the threat of offended sensitivities paralyzes interreligious discourse, but a society where differences of belief can be expressed vigorously and debated with the rational opposition of goodwill. We cannot abandon mission if Jesus has truly risen from the dead: "It is finally the abeyance of*

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*mission which would be the supremely damnable egoism – for this would be to keep to ourselves privately what belongs to the whole world (Cragg 2000, p182)*

*The commission to disciple all nations stands at the centre of the church's mandate and the church that forgets this, or marginalizes it, forfeits the right to the titles catholic and apostolic (L Newbigin, International bulletin of missionary research, April 1988 p 50) (Peskest & Ramachandra 2003, p180)*

*The Holy Spirit, the gift of the Kingdom, works in society strengthening the wills of people who may not be Christian to turn God's way. Such empowerment does not guarantee that all will be able to live out the Christian ethic, but it enables them to see the possibilities and make their choices. Kingdom activity unmasks the activity of the evil one, convicts people and strengthens their wills to act (John 18:8-11). It conserves society and clarifies people's choice. This makes the invitation of the gospel of the Kingdom relevant in every situation. (Oxford statement 1996, p377)*

*God fights for us, not we for him. We are called to witness, to struggle, to resist, to suffer. But the battle is the Lord's as is the final victory. (Wright 2006, p178)*

*People from most avowedly non-Christian families experience opposition when they turn to Christ: those from atheistic families may be mocked and marginalized; those from Jewish families may be considered traitors, and even be expelled from home and have funeral rites read for them; those from Muslim families may be expelled from the family and, in extreme cases, be killed; those from Hindu families may be seen as breaking family tradition and insulting their parents. This is not only because of spiritual obduracy or enmity to Christ, but also because of the anticipated disruption of household, tradition and community and the loss of family honour. The New Testament sees such opposition as normal (e.g. Matt. 10:34-6): it is the cost of following Jesus. (Glaser & Niringiye 2008 p225,226)*

## Different types of witness

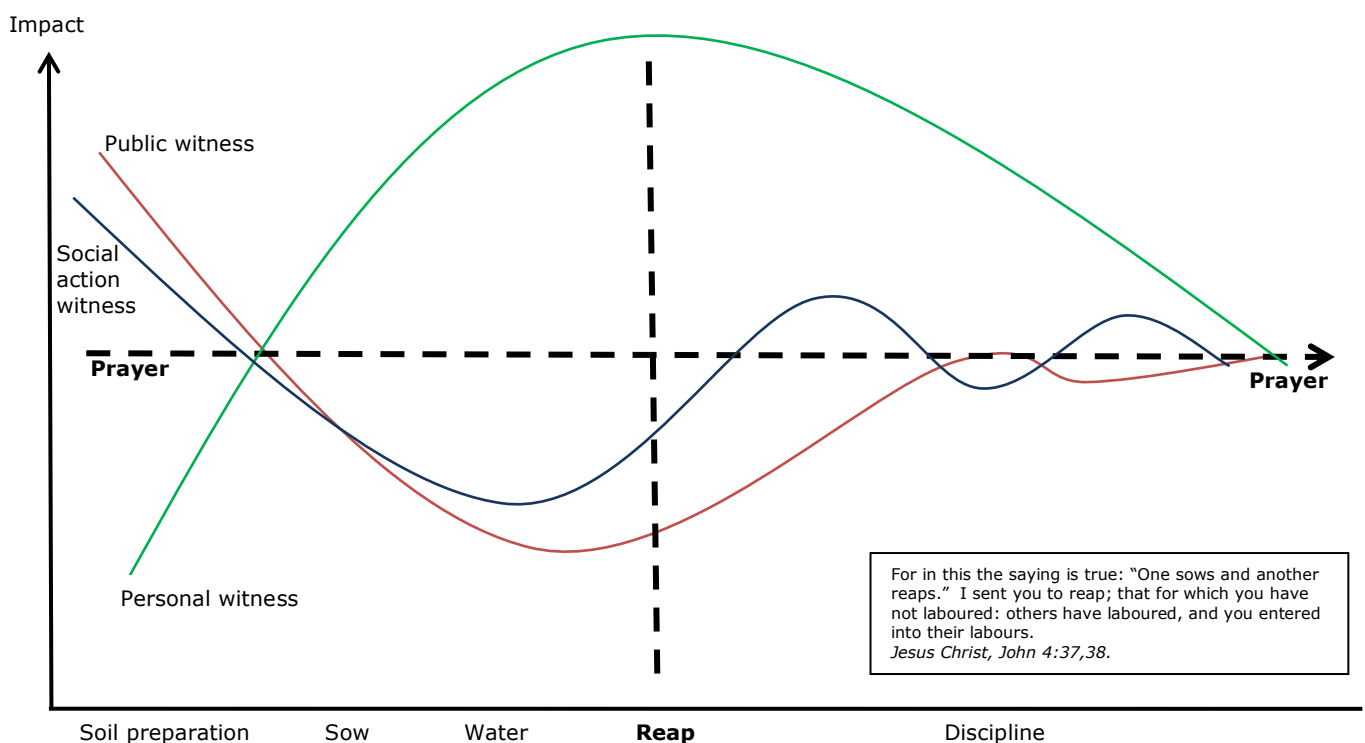
Evangelism can be seen a process, rather than an event.

It starts with preparing the ground - where the personal witness of the church physically caring for its community is often a starting point - and peaks at the harvest when a person accepts the Gospel message. The message is often carried in a combination of ways, with personal witness having a particularly sustained impact on others.

*The Christian message is not a disembodied piece of information that just needs to be circulated in massive campaigns, through print, film, video or broadcast media. It is the good news embodied and shared in the changed lives of individuals and communities that constitutes authentic witness. Without this embodiment, Christians are vulnerable to the charge of propaganda, with the resistance and distrust this commonly evokes. It is the life of a school teacher, day after day, that makes most impact on the pupils she lives among. In southern Sudan Christians commonly lack all the apparatus of modern communication; yet the church has grown as Christians demonstrated a different quality of life in the midst of disaster, degradation and despair. (Peskestt & Ramachandra 2003, p101)*

Three types of witness are illustrated here: public, personal and social action. While each may exist in their own right, the overall impact will be greater in co-existence.

*Often the transformational development process begins with witness through good deeds. As relationships develop, the way we live our lives and treat people becomes a witness of life. (Myers 1998, p134)*



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*Public witness relates to the Gospel coming to the public from most often anonymous sources. It could be messages in print, on radio or TV, in public meetings or hearsay comments from those with whom we do not have a personal relationship. When a society has Christians who present a "voice" that reflects the Gospel message, principles and values, the people of the nation are being made aware of the truth of Scripture.*

*The Personal Witness comes from people with whom we have some kind of personal relationship. In Personal Witness, the Gospel story or truths are not only shared, but the recipient of the message has the Gospel flowing through the life of the messenger. The Public Witness creates awareness while the Personal Witness shapes the attitudes and convictions to the message. A crucial element of the Gospel is the social dynamic. Not only does the Gospel call us to respond to Jesus Christ, but it calls us to reconciled relationships and identification with the people of God.*

*Social Action comes from people who are serving the community in one way or another, but who may not be sharing the Gospel message per se in Word – rather with a focus on sacrificial Deed and illuminating a lifestyle in keeping with Christian values and ethics. Social action on its own will have little overall impact and the process unlikely to be sustained if it is not supported by the sharing of the Gospel message.*

*Prayer is a continuous thread throughout the process – it begins with prayer, often long before social action or witness is present or planned. It continues with prayer – unending. (Edmonds 2003 & 2004)*

Social action has been likened to "pre-evangelism". However, evangelism as a process will by its very nature have various stages and events, and can embrace the whole course of action.

*CRESR (Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility) attempts to make a distinction between pre-evangelism and evangelism. Pre-evangelism may take the form of social development and involvement and this may make conditions more favourable for evangelism. The present writer believes that if the term evangelism is used, the other two terms are rendered superfluous. Evangelization may begin among a particular people with the arrival of Gospel values embodied in faithful Christian care and service, or it may begin with the proclamation of the "Kerygma" followed by "love in action". Evangelization is the exposure of an individual or a group of people to the demands of the Gospel and their gradual transformation as a result of this exposure. Evangelization in its truest sense would affect every area of life. (Nazir-Ali 1987, p89)*

There is no set formula for witness: but there are certain demands on Christians regarding witness, namely it must be clear that the witness is to Christ Jesus, and that ultimately the process of witness must include the proclamation of the Word of God.

*Mission may not always begin with evangelism. But mission that does not ultimately include declaring the Word and the name of Christ, the call to repentance, and faith and obedience has not completed its task. It is defective mission, not holistic mission. (Wright 2006, p319)*

*Central to living and serving with a passion for the Kingdom of God is the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom and teaching the ethic of the Kingdom... There is none that can perform it but the people of God. (Taylor 2002, p75)*

*Any Christian understanding of transformational development must keep the person of Jesus and the claims and promise of the kingdom central to the defining of what better future we are working for and for choosing the means of getting there... The biblical story, of which the Jesus story is the center, is a transformative story. The story of Jesus can heal our story and can heal the story of any community or society by giving it hope and life, if we will accept God's offer of redemption. Failure to share this story is to withhold the only story that Christians believe brings real hope. No other story leads to life. This is the only story that has good news, transformative news, for human sin and*

*for dominating human systems. There can be no better human future apart from this story. For this reason, transformational development done by Christians must include sharing the biblical story in a way that people can understand and that calls for a response. (Myers 1998, p50)*

The witness and proclamation of the Gospel message are demands on the Christian, while the aid offered to the poor remains totally unconditional. At the end of the day, whatever the reaction of the person to the Gospel message, the aid should always be there for them, whatever their beliefs. God's love for all people is never diminished.

Finally, the active words here for Christians are *witness* and *proclamation*: not transformation or conversion. Christians can't change others, Christians can't transform people, and Christians can't convert others to the Christian faith. This is the work of God, and God only – albeit Christians are involved. God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, can bring about change, transformation of individuals, communities, of society. Thus the church and Christian development workers are not in the business of transforming people but are called to be true and faithful witnesses to the living God, in order to promote a setting which will help bring about a change in others.

*This is not a call for proselytism; neither is it a call to coercive, manipulative, or culturally insensitive evangelism. It is not even a call for all development practitioners to become evangelists. After all, no one knows the moment when someone is ready for faith, nor is God limited to the staff of a particular Christian development agency in bringing God's good news. Rather, it is a call to be sure we do our development with an attitude that prays and yearns for people to know Jesus Christ. (Myers 1998, p205)*

*The great missionary hope is that when the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, God himself does what man cannot do – he creates faith which saves. (Piper 1986, p195)*

Taking this reasoning one stage further, transformation and salvation should be seen as separate entities. Transformation can occur without necessarily there being salvation, although transformation will always be of a temporal nature without the salvation element. Everyone is on a journey, and God is able to work through all people, without them necessarily acknowledging him or accepting Christ Jesus as Lord. This should give Christian relief and development organizations encouragement that significant change can take place as people journey. Such a change in people will be fulfilled to its wholeness and have an eternal significance when the Lordship of Christ Jesus is accepted by the individual.

*In the confession of Jesus as Lord, which is the heart of the kingdom experience inspired by the Holy Spirit, there is freedom for Christ's lordship to operate, to be expressed, and to be experienced in its fullness. On the other hand, Christ's lordship may be evident in many other areas of life – in the struggle for economic justice, for example – though it cannot be confined to any one of them. The Holy Spirit's activity of applying the lordship of Christ may begin with economic justice, but it breaks through to infuse all of life with the lordship of Christ so that all people will profess his name and bow to him as Lord of all. (Samuel & Sugden 1987, p142)*

*Biblical teaching looks forward to a new heaven and a new earth. (Isaiah 65). It describes the components of this transformed creation – reconciled and restored to God's purposes for it. The Bible also pictures transformation as from one degree to another (2 Corinthians 13:18) till completeness is reached. We must attempt to recover the Biblical vision of Transformation recognizing that Biblical teaching embraces the universal and the particular that reinforce each other. The Gospel does not impose one narrative of Transformation but creates room for diverse testimonies to it, all originating from a*

*common source of enlightenment and empowerment by the working of the same Holy Spirit. (Samuel 2008, p4,5)*

## Unconditionality

It is interesting to look at what should primarily drive an organization to respond to others in need.

Drivers may legitimately include *inter alia*:

- to fulfil internal targets and goals;
- to meet expectations of supporters;
- to contribute to wider development or poverty reduction goals; and
- to gain acceptance and support of recipients, of local authorities, governments and so forth.

These drivers, applied correctly, are compelling factor to help achieve vision at organizational level, and will normally be brought into the planning and action equations in the life of Christian organizations. However, in the life and ministry of Jesus, his response to others in need, stemmed from his *love* for others: a self-giving, unconditional, indiscriminating love for others – whether a friend, a neighbour, the unappreciative, an enemy.

*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5: 43-44)*

*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Matthew 12: 28-31)*

**This also needs to be the primary driving force for a Christian organization;** a relief and development response with total unconditionality, **a response out of the love of others**, even those who may reject the response, who may turn to persecute – those who may be seen as the enemy. There needs to be a response of love and forgiveness, even when faced with the most severe circumstances.

*Since forgiveness has profound political implications, we should not be surprised that the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation towards our national enemies will create new enemies of the Christian church. Peacemaking lies at the heart of Christian mission, but so often peacemakers themselves become targets of hatred and violence. But here, too, we learn from the example of Jesus. Not only did he reject, right from the outset of his ministry, the militant ideology of both oppressor and oppressed, refusing to assume the role of the Qumranic Melchizedek and declare a holy war on Israel's enemies, but when he himself became the object of collective violence he showed forgiving love both towards those crucified alongside him and the soldiers who drove nails into his body. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p167)*

*When Graham Staines, an Australian missionary working among lepers and tribal peoples in Orissa, India, was brutally murdered, along with his two young sons, by a Hindu mob on 22 January 1999, many in that country and abroad were rightly outraged. His grieving widow told a newspaper reporter, "I am deeply upset. But I am not angry. For Jesus has taught us how to love our enemies." Here the path of evangelical mission is displayed.*

*To suffer joyfully for the gospel, and to forgive and serve those who inflict that suffering, is to be taught by Christ to walk the way of the cross. It is only the church, radical in its obedience, that makes known the beauty, truth and power of the Christian message to the world. (Ramachandra 1999)*

It will only be through love that transformation will take place:

*The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. Jesus sums up the whole Law, focusing it on the commandment of love (cf. Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). Before leaving his disciples, he gives them a "new commandment": "Love one another; even as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34; cf. 15:12). Jesus' love for the world finds its highest expression in the gift of his life for mankind (cf. Jn 15:13), which manifests the love which the Father has for the world (cf. Jn 3:16). The kingdom's nature, therefore, is one of communion among all human beings-with one another and with God. (Paulus 1990, section 15)*

*The mission of the church is to give visible evidence of the kingdom and its ethics within its own community and in its ministry to the world. (Brussels statement 1999, p42)*

*To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is fountain of sending love. (Bosch 1991, p390)*

*We often wonder what can make Christians distinctive in the world and allow people to see Christ. The answer is loving people, especially the unlovable. If poverty is rooted in broken relationships, then it is love expressed through practical works of service that will be the solution. By loving non-Christians we have the chance to break out from patterns of rivalry between religions, and by loving Christians we can build family, so that all people will know that we are his disciples. (Grant 2008, p149)*

*God's calling to mission is a calling to service. Again, service is not so much a function as a definition of the Church. The community Jesus founded is diakonia (Mark 10:43-45). God's people are judged not by their formal piety but by the spontaneous compassion they show – or fail to show – to those in need with whom Jesus Christ identifies himself (Matt. 24:44; Acts 11:29; 12:25). (Kirk 1999, p32)*

There has been open criticism by some, of the witness of Christian organizations in disaster and emergency relief situations, with the suspicion that strings are attached to life-giving aid being distributed or services provided. Such criticism prompted the following response from the Christian relief and development organization, Tearfund, UK:

*But whether it is long-term poverty alleviation or emergency relief, making acceptance of our faith a condition of receiving aid is abhorrent. The poor people we meet in disaster zones (for the poorest always take the full brunt of disasters) are often distraught, always vulnerable. When giving assistance in Christ's name in some of the world's most tragic situations it is critical that we do not imply: "We will help you only if you sign up to our faith..." It would have been profoundly un-Christ-like to have offered aid with strings attached to the distraught and bereaved families I met on the beach in Sri Lanka in the days following the tsunami, or to women from Darfur violated by militiamen and driven from their homes whom I met trekking towards refugee camps in Chad. In such situations we are reflecting Christ to others simply through our very presence, our actions and prayers.*

*Which is far from saying that faith does not have a central place in humanitarian work. Humanitarianism and social reform have deep roots in Christian faith. Christian Henry Dunant began the Red Cross and the devout William Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury led the campaigns against slavery and child labour.*

*And the fact that many people afflicted by disaster have a faith is recognised by Article 58 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention of 1949. It deems religious and worship items as legitimate relief supplies because they help to ensure the well being of those suffering.*

*Tearfund's Christian partners in the developing world would be unsurprised by such a clause. They do not share a western approach to life that separates the physical and spiritual. They sensibly argue that as Christians we cannot divorce our acts of compassion from who we are as Christians. And that the role of the Church is one of 'holistic mission' - responding to the needs of poor people, while at the same time reflecting God's love through relationship.*

*Such a holistic approach is perhaps most strikingly evident in long-term development, rather than the emergency relief which is often focussed on saving lives in the short-term. Aid and Evangelism, (Ewing 2007)*

## **An inclusive approach**

When working in non-Christian environments, it is important to recognize that God is present and working. There is no place on earth where God has not gone before others, there is not one person in this world who God does not know and does not love. Christians can't claim to possess the whole truth, but can point to the One, Christ Jesus of Nazareth who is the Truth. When developing mission plans and strategy, there is a need to build on the reality that God already has a relationship with all people, and that the aim of witness and proclamation is to help those individuals who don't know him have a relationship with God. This needs to be carried out with a sensitivity embracing cultural differences, with an understanding of other faiths, philosophies and viewpoints, and in the knowledge that they are all created in the image of God, known by him from the beginning of time:

*If there are no churches, God has nonetheless been working in the community since the beginning of time, with God's story being hidden or only partly known or recognized. (Myers 1998, p111)*

*Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission ad gentes; indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions. This mission, in fact, is addressed to those who do not know Christ and his Gospel, and who belong for the most part to other religions. In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wishes to share with them the fullness of his revelation and love. He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors." (Paulus 1990, section 55)*

*Christian mission must therefore treat all human beings with dignity, equality and respect. When we look at any other person, we do not see the label (Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, secular atheist, white, black, etc.) but the image of God. We see someone created by God, addressed by God, accountable to God, loved by God, valued and evaluated by God. So while we affirm the validity of reaching out in mission to all people everywhere, we must also think critically about the methods, attitudes and assumption with which we do so. (Wright 2006, p423)*

*For Indians, God is more involved in day-to-day life than most Western Christians' theology would allow. The average Hindu need not be introduced to God in that sense. They need to be introduced to the name of that God-Jesus. I've said many times that we do not need to break our heads in India convincing any Indian about the existence of God. The challenge is, "What is the name of this God who is involved with the poor?" That's*

*where Christian distinctiveness-and divisiveness-is felt.* Jayakumar Christian, Christianity Today, 2007 (www.christianitytoday.com)

*His kingdom is not to be identified with the church. Much more than that, it is the establishment of God's rule over the cosmos, the whole creation (Eph. 1:21-22). Even though the church is a sign of God's rule, his plan to govern all things established in the Old Testament is not fulfilled in the church alone. Its fulfilment is a universal one, as his rule extends over all creation and all nations.* (Samuel & Sugden 1999, p176)

*The Bible appears to teach that the prayers of those outside the covenant-community can be heard by God.* (Nazir-Ali 1995, p102)

*Common values within the great religions can be used as a starting point for dialogue. Knowledge of both your own and about the others beliefs make dialogue easier and are a prerequisite for the recognition of common values.* (Bondevik 2008, p258)

*The challenge is how to acknowledge that God is at work in all nations and in their histories and yet that what he has done in the history of Israel, a history that reaches its consummation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is not only paradigmatic (of his work elsewhere), but decisive for the future of the whole world. How do we relate that "once-for-all" sense of God's saving action in Jesus to what God has been doing and continues to do among people who have never heard of Jesus? This calls us to discern, in our missionary engagement, whatever is compatible with the gospel in all cultures and societies, affirming and nurturing their growth, but also exposing and confronting those things that are incompatible.* (Peskest & Ramachandra 2003, p111,112)

*In all of our programs and actions we should remember that God in His sovereignty and love is already active in the communities we seek to serve (Acts 14:17; 17:23; Rom. 2:9-15). Agencies, therefore, should give adequate priority to listening sensitively to the concerns of these communities, facilitating a two-way process in communication and local ownership of programs. The guiding principle is equitable partnership in which local people and Western agencies cooperate together. Many models for development have originated in the Two-Thirds World. Christian aid agencies should in every way encourage these local initiatives to succeed. In this way the redeemed community of the Kingdom will be able to experiment with a number of models of transformation.* (Wheaton Statement 1983 Section 46)

*Through the sending of the Spirit the mystery becomes accessible to all, the world over, because the mystery has opened itself up to the world to that end, so that the world may partake of it. The world may, can, should believe. Access to God is open to all.* (Sundermeier u.d. p560)

*So the whole earth belongs to Jesus as Lord. The missiological, ethical and (here) practical implications of such a worldview are staggering... For if the whole earth belongs to Jesus, there is no corner of the earth to which we can go in mission that does not already belong to him. There is not an inch of the planet that belongs to any other god, whatever the appearances. A Christ-centred theology of divine ownership of the whole world is a major foundation for missional theology, practice and ultimate confidence.* (Wright 2006, p112)

*The ministry of the church must be to all people because all have been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Because God bestows human dignity on all people, everyone, regardless of their status in life, deserves the church's full attention.* (Brussels statement 1999, p43)

*If, however, God's whole work in the world is related to the death and resurrection of Christ, we may look for the pattern of redemption at work where God is at work in the world beyond the church. We can say that God does more than preserve and judge the world outside the church; he works to change it into conformity with his redemption plan.* (Sider 1981, p54)

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:15-17)*

## Communion with God, and in partnership with others

When considering Christian relief and development programmes – who should be engaged, who should develop strategy, who should implement the work, who should be sent?

Personnel and partner selection is an ongoing issue facing many churches and Christian organizations. Can non-Christian professionals offer solutions to spiritual problems? Can Christians from Western backgrounds properly understand and engage with other cultures? Can non-Christian partners engage with integral mission? Can and should indigenous spiritually-minded, well-intended Christians be expected to embrace all elements of professionalism and understanding from their Western partners and supporters perspectives? Should Christian relief and development efforts be in partnership with non-Christian efforts?

It is important not to be prescriptive in such matters. Much will depend on the organization's internal mission and vision, its organizational and structural set up, the countries and thematic areas it works in, its partners and supporter base, the employment rules and regulations that govern its procedures, and readiness of others. Thus there is no single or simple answer, there is no given solution: however there are certain considerations that can be brought into the equation:

Consideration needs to be given to the following matters:

- If an integral mission approach is adopted, how important is it that leaders of an organization or leaders of the subsequent response on the ground, are able to effectively engage with both the physical and spiritual? Is it possible to have non-Christian leaders lead and witness to a Christian response? What weighting should be given to the person's connectedness to God, to the truth— however it may be measured or gauged? What importance should be given to communion and counsel with God in the life of a leader and the role of God's wisdom versus wisdom from others?

*Listen to no man who fails to listen to God... No man has any right to offer advice who has not first heard God speak. No man has any right to counsel others who is not ready to hear and follow the counsel of the Lord. True moral wisdom must always be an echo of God's voice. (Tozer 1990, p20,21)*

*Where is truth found? How is truth to be known? It is a problem for kings, so that they may guide national policies aright (cf. 1 Kings 22:5-7); it is a problem for prophets, that they may be certain that what they preach is dictated by God and not by the preference of congregations (cf. Ezk. 2:6,7); it is a problem for priests, lest pastoral counsel degenerate into that sort of "partiality" or "respect of persons" which tells people what they want to hear (cf. Mal. 2:7-9). But the problem is not confined to the great ones of the earth. Amos makes no reference to them. It was the people themselves, and each for himself or herself, who faced the choice and chose amiss. Antiquity is no safe guide, for (as Pusey says) "the popular error of one generation becomes the axiom of the next". Human authority is no safe guide, for (to quote Pusey again) "the children canonize the errors of their fathers". Nothing affords a safe anchorage for life except the word which God Himself has spoken. The people of God possess this – in Amos' day by the written and preached deposits of their own ancient past and in the contemporary voice of prophecy; in our day by the written deposit of the completed Scriptures – and it is the hall-mark of the*

*people of God to recognize this divine word of truth, to use it as the criterion for judging all things, and to reject all would-be competitors. (Motyer 1974, p53)*

*Faith institutions and leaders often stand as courageous leaders who "speak truth to power" and help with difficult moral transitions. Witness the role of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in fighting apartheid in South Africa, and of faith groups in confronting child soldiers, trafficked girls, female genital cutting, persecution of witches, and oppression of excluded groups. Thinking deeply about such issues is central to the calling of religious leaders, and they rely on centuries-old traditions to do so. (Marshall 2005, p10)*

- What value is there is a joined-up response – a liaison of the Christian, other faiths and secular, each with their distinctive contribution? Why is contact with other faiths sometimes perceived as a dilution of your own belief, rather than a display of strength and confidence? Can positive engagement be possible with a security that lies in God, rather than lying in the strength of Christian reasoning or interpretation? Is there a call for the church and Christian organizations to put aside such fears and venture outside their safety zone?

*People of different faiths are sometimes afraid of losing their religious identity, or even their faith, in interfaith dialogue, but my experience and that of others have been the opposite...*

*Religious dialogue must happen from on the grassroots, solving practical questions concerning the everyday life of the people. Common projects like solving the problems of water supply, lack of security in the neighbourhood, conflicts between youths or the need for extra homework assistance for young people or immigrants. Having concrete common problems to solve can help people to develop friendship and fellowship.*

*We see today also a tendency that different religious communities find common ground in a world that gets more secular. They realize that there is a common understanding between them of the importance of religion in the different aspects of life.*

*Still, we must remember that many religious groups are not interested in dialogue, both among Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others. It is safe to stay within our own community, and there may be an inclination among religious and political leaders to keep their positions of power. Religion may also be used for political and economic purposes. Different interpretations of a religion can also hamper a necessary development in different areas, and conserve attitudes that need to be changed in order to promote a free and just world with equal rights for all. Old traditions can stand in the way of necessary development. Inequality between the sexes can be a challenge, and is often maintained by laws emanating from a doubtful interpretation of the scriptures of a religion. Certain religious groups are only motivated by the hope of gaining converts and serve only their own followers. (Bondevik 2008, p225)*

*At its heart, the arguments for engaging in an active dialogue between institutions of faith and development turn around the growing appreciation that there are enormous areas of overlap, convergence, shared concern and knowledge, and a core common purpose. Both faith and development institutions seek to work WITH poor communities to improve their lives and ensure them a better future. (Marshall 2005, p11)*

*As Christians our primary resource for the context of transformation is the Bible. But if Transformation has to do with moral goods, values and virtues do cultures not have significant differences in the priority and values of moral goods? Some cultures may place a much higher value on family, clan and community than the individual, on submission and obedience to traditional authority than individual freedom. Should we as Christians see transformation as universal and trans-cultural?*

*We need to explore further and consider how other faith communities may partner us in transformational development. It is here I believe a clearer articulation of the goals of*

*moral personhood and moral community could become key instruments in finding a basis for joint action. Other faith communities must be encouraged to identify resources from their faith for promoting moral personhood and moral community. This could lead to traveling together in a journey where Christ's blessed presence may become visible. (Samuel 2008, p31,32)*

*Dialogue with other faiths: the catholicity of the Church is not a static concept, of course. Catholicity is not only about communion among the churches, it is not only about communion among local Christians. Catholicity has to do with the whole world, the whole oikoumene, the whole of the inhabited world, and for this reason it is absolutely essential that ecumenism should be in a close relationship to dialogue with people outside the Christian churches (with people of other faiths, for example). (Nazir-Ali, 1995 p72)*

*It was recognised that **inter-religious activities** can often be more effective than those carried out by a single faith community. In several countries, Benin among them, there have been joint Christian-Muslim approaches to the authorities to discuss ways of reducing poverty, improving tribal relations and ensuring political stability. In Niger, Christian and Muslim religious leaders took part in the discussions around the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The common programme of Muslims and Christians in Africa co-ordinated from Nairobi was mentioned as highly productive. (World Faiths Development Dialogue 2003, p6)*

*It is suggested that the major areas of opportunity for, but in general neglected by, the church are as follows... Networking with other development agencies at local and sub-national regional levels: in particular, the church could activate links with Christian businesses and sources of development finance, as well as with public sector agencies and Christian NGOs. (Belshaw 2001, p58)*

- In relation to the above, where do leaders and members of the local church sit in the personnel recruitment mix? Taking into account all that has been said before, are they always going to be an integral part of the solution whatever their strengths and weaknesses, or are they going to be involved as thought appropriate?

*The church is central to God's plan, and the local church in particular is the means that he uses to change communities. Church denominations and specialist Christian development and mission organizations must support the work of the local church and not marginalize it. Christian development agencies face a choice as to whether they work through or around the local church. If in ten years' time we have strengthened our own organizations to serve poor people, but left local churches weak and marginalized, then we will not have contributed to God's long-term strategy. (Grant 2008, p174)*

*...the sign of the kingdom is the church, the community of faith, not the development worker or the development agency. Somehow development workers must become a part of the church. As Christians, their local community of faith is the local church. Their work needs to be seen as a sign of that church, not some personal beacon. (Myers 1998, p38)*

*Partnership with churches is essential for building moral communities. The church must be encouraged and equipped to be a moral community nurturing citizenship among its members, engaging in sharing Christian truth and public truth, challenging and influencing public policy and discourse. (Samuel 2008, p22)*

*The communication of the gospel is not primarily the work of visiting evangelists; rather, it is the work of the local Christian communities who patiently articulate to others what Christ is so obviously doing in their own collective life. Christians who come from outside the church must first seek out local believers and identify with them. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p205)*

*We hear cries of pain of churches and communities of Christ's people in local areas when some outside agencies, driven by ardour of their convictions, have acted – in the opinion*

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*of some local churches – without consultation, to the detriment of the work and vision of these churches. Such action does not strengthen, but weakens the credibility and witness of the church. (Stuttgart consultation 1987, p285)*

- What import should be given to a view that indigenous challenges are often better off with indigenous solutions – and these in turn will be more sustainable? An indigenous-led development of strategy and subsequent response will often bring with it a connectedness beyond compare to outsiders. An indigenous response will:
  - bring first-hand experience of living in a world of injustice and persecution, a world of suffering, a world of discrimination;
  - bring generational experiences of living in times of drought, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, hunger;
  - connect more with the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized;
  - likely reflect a life where the physical and spiritual more naturally go hand-in-hand in the society they live and work;
  - have a better understanding of identity issues relating to nationalism, tribalism and Christianity in their cultural context.

A connectivity that is not generally reflected with personnel involvement from the Western world, however much overseas experience and good intent they may have.

*Priority must be given to adequate mentoring and coaching of new leaders, especially the young, in order that the emphasis on the leadership role is in servanthood and not status. Skills of resourcing in the local and international environment will be essential in the coming years as well as skills of research, problem solving and implementation. NGOs will need to provide significant resources in education and mentoring. (Consultation report 1996, p406)*

*Development agencies need to see that many of the solutions to problems may be found in indigenous culture. The problem is that culture is usually tied to religion and it is difficult to separate the two. In working with culture we must always ensure that cultural traits and practices should be judged on the grounds of biblical truth and values.*

*In reflecting upon the Christian response to human need, we have recognized the central place of the local church as the vehicle for communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ both in word and deed. Churches around the world have throughout history displayed active concern for the needs around them and continue to serve the needy. We call upon aid agencies to see their role as one of facilitating the churches in the fulfilment of their mission. (Wheaton Statement 1983, section 41)*

*There may be a need for greater realism in the so-called participative approach to the preservation of indigenous peoples. Whatever is done by Western NGOs, Christian or otherwise, is largely driven by a Western agenda. As Christians we have the advantage of being subject, like those whom we seek to serve, to a higher authority. ... we need to recognise that if we encourage the survival of indigenous peoples through such means as participative development, the protection of land rights and bilingual education, we are encouraging them to move in the direction of self-determination and autonomy. (Hughes 2001)*

*NGOs must focus on: facilitating collection of local knowledge and wisdom; dialogue with local communities to identify information needs, assess problems, and enhance local*

*capacity to effect solutions; equipping local communities for knowledge acquisition and application...* (Consultation report 1996, p405)

*Church leaders hold the potential of being change agents in their societies. Often they are not representing a power threat to the political leadership in the country, and thereby they hold a potential for developing and practicing an alternative leadership system: a system, where e.g. the fear aspect and the lack of initiative may be exchanged with systems of respect, cooperation, learning and development. If new leadership systems may be developed, systems where the leaders and their followers may hold more constructive roles, this may bring a situation where quality results may be reached. The bigger picture is that such changes may ultimately bring positive change to the organization and to the society.* (Lemvik 2008, p347,348)

- What value is there in a global Christian response – Christians from the Two-thirds world and the Western world working together for a common cause, to a common vision? Aid workers, developers and theologians from the Western world have a rooted understanding of the Western culture and the related populous view of poverty, a people who have significant resources to share and influence to bear on the powers that take decisions affecting the poor. Recruits from the West may offer access to counterpart organizations, donor support, and churches; they may proffer professional advice from a Western or contextualized perspective; they may be a bridge and the story tellers to the rest of the world; they may facilitate and help apply wider learning.

Speaking on mission in Africa with special reference to the Catholic Church, but of equal relevance to the whole church, Bosch (1991) writes:

*The rediscovery of the local church as the primary agent of mission has led to a fundamentally new interpretation of the purpose and role of missionaries and mission agencies. ...no longer may foreign missionary orders and societies dictate the pattern of evangelism in the Third World. The whole world is a mission field, and the distinction between sending and receiving churches is becoming pointless. Every church is either still in a diaspora situation or has returned to it. And churches everywhere need each other.* (Bosch 1991, p380)

Taking all the above considerations into account will encourage action by Christian organizations in the following areas:

- **Recruitment and leadership:**
  - review of personnel recruitment policies and partner selection criteria;
  - reflection on differences between leadership concept in Two-thirds world versus the West;
  - re-examination of the appointment of leaders (including greater opportunities for women) of: projects; programmes; country and regional offices; and so forth;
  - preparation of personnel – the development of the professional and spiritual qualities hand-in-hand;
  - development of **indigenous leadership**: introduce into programmes the longer-term development and support of local leaders, building upon indigenous knowledge, understanding and perspectives, as well as connecting to the wider academic world for essential scholarly support and to meet required standards: albeit the standards may have been set by, and governed from the West. The training and equipping of future indigenous leaders is often a medium- to long-term course of action.

- **Involvement of the local church:** reconsider their central role and inclusion - to promote the integral mission approach, as discussed at length in other sections.
- **Working with other faiths and the secular world:** bringing about a joined up response in the fight against poverty, each making a distinctive contribution with integrity – whilst maintaining transparency and honesty about their actions and upholding what they stand for and what they believe in.
- **Two-thirds world and the West in partnership:** look at the development of stronger partnerships – drawing on the strengths and capabilities of the two parties.

## Faith and economic development

Interestingly, faith itself can lift a person out of poverty. Faith can affect a person's outlook on life, their view of how things should be done. With a person being transformed, on a journey exploring faith or coming to faith, they will steward the resources they have, however little or great, to better effect. This will often mean a more prudent approach to spend, with priority being given to family – food, health care, education for the children. Thus without any external development project, a person and their family may benefit, be lifted out of economic poverty, by a change in the person through faith.

*Is it not true that when an individual comes to personal faith in Christ it changes that person's economic circumstances? Money previously spent on unrighteous living is now available to be spent otherwise. As that Christian is disciplined, he/she encounters and begins to practice the principles of stewardship found in God's word. As those principles of stewardship are practically worked out in the individual's life, economic situations change further. (Seale 2002, p68)*

*Employment is often unstable; housing is precarious; and vices, such as gambling, prostitution, drugs and alcohol, are typically rampant. Within this context, the attraction of Pentecostalism is obvious: it brings order, stability, and hope to people who are living precarious lives. To their credit, Pentecostal churches often function like surrogate extended families. Typically, large churches have cell groups where members are surrounded by people who care for them and their families. Within these churches, it is also possible to have a social role, an identity, as someone is valued and needed... Typically it is the mother of the family who converts first, followed by the children and then her husband. The church is a type of "enclave" in which social order prevails. If the wife's husband stops drinking, womanizing, and gambling, immediate social benefits emerge, both in terms of income for the family and in tangible results such as shared responsibility for child-rearing and less violence within the household, including less spousal abuse. One may continue to be poor, but at least life is more orderly. (Miller & Yamamori 2007, p23)*

*Through salvation, Jesus lifts us out of our isolation from God and other people and establishes us within the worldwide community of the Body of Christ. Belonging to one Body involves sharing all God's gifts to us, so that there might be equality among all members (2 Cor. 8:14-15). To the extent that this standard is obeyed, dire poverty will be eliminated (Acts 2:42-47) (Wheaton Statement 1983, section 16)*

## Church and Christians

### The importance of the church

Christianity has become the most global of religions. There is no country without a Christian witness and only ten countries without a visible congregation of indigenous believers. The total number of

Christians was reported close to 2 billion in 2000, representing a third of the world's population. The most dynamic growth in Christianity has been with the Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements – especially in the Two-thirds world (Johnstone & Mandryk 2001)

The church has an enormous outreach. It operates at grass-roots level, as part of the community, built up from the community, knowing the community. It has often been there for hundreds of years, rooted in society, playing a central part of its history and future. Its local leaders have knowledge and understanding of local needs, the needs of the people it serves, the needs of the local environment. It is able to relate to and serve both the physical and spiritual requirements of the people. As well as working at a local level, it is joined up at national, regional and global levels. It comprises an extraordinary network, the world's largest physical network with the world's largest common membership - a communion of people, united in a universal belief.

*The church has a culture of volunteerism. People offer themselves to God in selfless service to humankind. Church members are committed to a culture of giving in cash and in kind – skills, labour, financial and material contributions. Among the membership, there is a pool of voluntary professional expertise from which the Church can draw for technical services. Even the salaried staff generally take their regular work as a calling and often go beyond the normal call of duty.*

*The Church has among its intangible assets the capacity to imbue the poor with hope, a necessary ingredient for them to keep on going until improvement is effected. The Church lives on faith and hope and it endeavours to infuse hope in all the people it serves.*

*The Church has an existing structure and mechanisms for initiating new activities. Its association – women's groups, men's groups, youth groups, and children's groups – serve as effective contacts and vision-carriers among their counterparts in the community. Generally, physical premises (such as meeting halls) and other facilities are available that hasten start-up processes.*

*The Church is part of a wider global institutional structure, with extensive interpersonal linkages, resource transfers, and opportunities for discussion, training, and so forth, at international level. These linkages are reinforced by the image of "the Body of Christ" transcending national, racial, and other boundaries, and can be drawn on when needed for solidarity and support. (Belshaw & Calderisi 2001, p221,222)*

At all levels, local, national and global – within local authorities, governments, multilateral agencies, the church has respect, influence, and a voice. These combined with its resources of people, finances and possessions have over the centuries been used to bring about change in society. The church and associated faith-based organizations have a long history of social engagement. An engagement that spans: the abolition of slavery to the abolition of apartheid; the provision of basic health care at village level to the global fight against HIV and AIDS; and the support of community micro-finance to the cancellation of US\$100 billion of the poorest nations debt.

*The European voyages of world discovery were motivated by religion, commerce, and political expansionism. The effects of the three motives are indelible. The indisputably bright part of history is that Christian missionaries brought the message of spiritual redemption and they also ministered to the physical needs of the people. In many places, they introduced new staple crops and the use of animal power for farming. In most African countries, formal education, vocational skills training, and modern health care services were pioneered by the Church. The management of these services subsequently passed from the missionaries to nationals.*

*Many of the national leaders in African countries were educated in Christian schools. Nevertheless, in line with Western secular trends, these leaders decided that government can and should run these services on its own. In many African countries, the*

*government took over church schools and hospitals. The result is well known. In many countries, when the government took over the schools, the Church stepped up vocational training for youths, for instance by introducing the concept of "village polytechnics." The Church has also made a significant contribution in providing safe water to rural communities by means of boreholes, hand-dug wells, protection of springs, and rainwater harvesting techniques.*

*The leaders of the Church have taken their prophetic role very seriously. In almost every country in Africa, the voice of the Church has been loud, clear and consistent against the ills in society. The Church has played a major role in the dismantling of apartheid. When oppressed by a dictator – military or civilian – citizens have usually looked to the Church to speak out on their behalf. And the Church has been alert to the onerous responsibility, in some cases at the cost of its leader's lives.*

*Civic education and election monitoring are recent additions to the work of the Church in many countries, and they have been proving so effective that unpopular political leaders have realized that they can no longer mislead and exploit the populace. (Belshaw & Calderisi 2001, p223,224)*

*The gospel is the most powerful antidote for domination that the world has ever known. It was that antidote that inspired the abolition of slavery, the women's movement, the non-violence movement, the civil rights movement, the human rights movement, the fall of Nazism, Fascism and Communism, the break-up of apartheid. (Jorgensen 2002, p224)*

It is recognized though that it is an engagement that hasn't been without its difficulties. The church has its strengths, but also its weakness and has sometimes gone off track – which from time to time has marred the overall church effort and caused some to look at the church with reservation. However, as the church has engaged in the transformation of communities, she too is being transformed, and the church today is larger, stronger and better equipped and supported to make a difference in society.

The church's role in society, in bringing about sustainable change is recognized by both the faith-based development community and the wider development community, including numerous bilateral and multilateral agencies. Working together in partnership will hasten the end to poverty, a common cause sought by all involved.

***Faith groups have a unique and important role in making poverty history. You don't need me to tell you that churches and other faith groups are often poor people's most trusted institutions. They are often the first to which the poor turn in times of need and crisis, and to which they give in times of plenty. As a result you are closely embedded and committed to local communities... Faith groups provide crucial services to the poor. They often run the only schools and health clinics in rural communities. In Sub-Saharan African, faith groups provide more than 50% of all health and education services. You can and do reach poor people largely untouched by other institutions. (Benn 2005)***

*With networks that reach even the most remote villages, many faith-based organizations and community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to promote HIV/AIDS stigma reduction and prevention messages, as well as to provide counseling and testing, home care, clinical services, and antiretroviral treatment. These organizations also have the ability to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their community members by building on relationships of trust and respect. These attributes make their partnership a valuable asset in the fight against HIV/AIDS. (PEPFAR 2007)*

*The World Bank has focused on a faith-development dialogue for five main reasons. Faith organizations have earned high levels of community trust. Faith institutions also work directly on development, most significantly in education, the environment, and health. Faith institutions not only fuel many conflicts but also work through a myriad of peace-making channels, sustaining communities and spearheading the rebuilding and healing process. They often promote links among communities across national boundaries. Faith*

*institutions also spur people to grapple with ethical issues ranging from corruption to equity. And they promote public support for development assistance, and help forge consensus around hard choices.*

*Faith organizations play major roles in communities and together constitute the world's largest distribution system. Poor communities around the world also trust faith leaders and institutions more than many other entities. Given their centuries of engagement in many dimensions of people's lives, development groups need to hear the views of faith-based groups and draw lessons from their experience. Religions also give hope and bring meaning to the lives of millions of people, and vast religious teachings on core values are essential to human relationships. (Marshall 2005, p9,10)*

*We increasingly recognize the role of civil society as a key network for environment and development programs. However—and with some notable exceptions—the potential of faith communities and faith-based organizations has not been fully explored. Yet in almost every country in the world, the faiths have a wider network on the ground than any other element of civil society. They also have centuries of experience, and in many places provide a substantial part of the educational, medical, and welfare structures and personnel in the country. They also often have larger followings than many political parties, across much wider social ranges. The faiths actually are the oldest, largest, most respected, and deepest-penetrating NGOs. They share with us an agenda of promoting wise environmental management, even if this has been somewhat lost during parts of their history. (The World Bank 2006)*

*Where faith and development institutions have combined their efforts and work to common ends, remarkable results have been achieved. The experience suggests two conclusions: first, that the engagement of faith communities in the fight against poverty is vital to success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals; and second, that there is great scope for new and different forms of partnership that work to the respective strengths of the different communities. Yet these efforts are too little known and the lessons, good and bad, have engendered too little reflection. (Marshall & Keough 2002, p14)*

### The church on a journey

It is recognized that the church has many shortcomings and is far from perfect. Indeed, the church can often be part of the problem when it comes to poverty. The church comprises people and thus weakness and failings arise. A church that in many situations world-wide has: suppressed the role of women; promoted stigma with HIV & AIDS and other diseases; sided with the oppressors; held onto financial resources while others are in need; focussed on spiritual well-being at the expense of the physical. However, the global church, the communion of churches, recognizes her weaknesses and struggles to correct them, she makes no claim to be perfect – but strives to be so and points to the one Christ Jesus who is. Thus it is important not to confuse the church, amid her failings, with God. The church is lacking, but God is complete; the church is on a journey, but God is already there; the church may sometimes display falsehoods, but she will always point the way to the truth.

*The church engages in mission not only in order that the world may be transformed, but that she too may be transformed more into the truth and purity of her Lord. The church does not claim to possess all truth and righteousness, but rather to point the world to the truly righteous one who is the truth, namely, Jesus Christ. And in that process of directing the world to Jesus Christ, the church herself is drawn into a deeper understanding of, and obedience to, the same Jesus. (Peskett & Ramachandra 2003, p197)*

*Transformation is not what we do for others. Transformation is what God does in us when we enter into a relationship of equality with others. We don't serve because we are already transformed. But rather we are transformed when we serve. (Quote from Tearfund partner: Amextra, Mexico, 2004)*

*We must remember that the church, while it is to be sign of the kingdom, is not the kingdom itself. The kingdom judges and redeems the church. The church is successful in being a sign to the extent that the Spirit makes it so. The church is a true sign only to the degree that it lives up to the spirit and life of the kingdom. "The church is not the end of mission, the kingdom is the end". (Jones 1972 cited in Myers 1998, p39)*

*Though the church often seems rife with quarrels, disagreements, and backslidings, it is still through this body – Christ's body – that his mission is continued in history, guided by the Holy Spirit. In this mission God, by his sovereignty, grace, and perfection, takes and uses our human imperfections, and ambiguities to fulfil his purpose. (Samuel & Sugden 1987, p139)*

*For the church to be, rather than to have, a social ethic means that it must be a community where the truth is lived and spoken. The story that forms the church is, as I have suggested, a reality-making claim that tells us the truth about the world and ourselves. Such truth is indeed hard. It means that we cannot know the truth until we have been transformed by the story. We cannot know Jesus without becoming his disciples. There is, therefore, an unavoidably self-involving character to Christian convictions. It requires that our very selves be transformed if we are to face the truth that we are sinners yet saved.*

*A community of such people cannot help but be a social ethic, since it must stand in sharp contrast with the world which would have us build our relations on distortions and denials. The world is where the truth is not spoken for fear such truth might destroy what fragile order and justice we have been able to achieve. But the church, which claims to be construed by a people who have no fear of the truth, must be a polity where the truth is spoken, even if such truth risks pain and threatens disorder. The church is thus a polity that takes as its constitution a story whose truth creates a people who love honestly, because they have the confidence that such love binds our lives to God's very character. (Hauerwas 1985, p182,183)*

### Christian discernment and spiritual disciplines

Christians participating in God's mission have challenging times before them where true leadership, direction and strength will make all the difference between success and failure. Christians and the organizations they form need discernment, courage, power, focus, wisdom, good counsel, encouragement, and confidence to do the right thing - all these in an environment more attuned to war rather than peace. There are battles with authorities, battles with dictators, battles opposing policies that harm the poor and vulnerable, battles of a spiritual nature.

Against this background, God has provided unlimited power and resources, access to a wisdom beyond human understanding and the means to access all this – through prayer and the Holy Spirit. However, understanding what God is saying, trying to make out what is being said can be complex: especially when mixed messages may be coming forward from a number of people, from various signs, from differing events, all possibly from God.

Because there is no blueprint as such for Christian organizations, mixed messages and the resultant debate can especially occur when an organization is deciding on key matters or making longer-term plans. In such cases, the functionality of leadership and management within an organization will play an important part. Leaders in close communion with God in the power of the Holy Spirit need to listen to fellow believers and take on board comments of varying perspectives, views from different angles and so forth and then arrive at a balanced decision with resolve and determination. The decision is thus from the leadership or those with delegated authority, in communion with God

and others, using evidence and His word (Acts 15). With such an action, fellow-believers should be able to put aside any differences and support the outcome with full confidence that the decision is well-founded.

Discerning the will of God is a challenge for all Christians and accordingly people need to be properly prepared. In preparation, God demands a number of things from us, namely we are obedient to Him, we are patient, and do our best to be right with Him, in close communion with Him and with fellow believers in the community. The following has been adapted from Mark Pearson's book, "The basics of faith" (Pearson 1995, p54,55):

- **A yielded life, a life of obedience:** the earliest creed recited in the Christian church was "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3). God does not reveal Himself to us to satisfy our curiosity; neither does God reveal His will so we may consider it among various options. He is Lord – we must obey. If you ask God for His guidance, you must be ready in advance to follow it, no matter what it is. Knowing God's perfect will is a tremendous blessing for a Christian, but it is also a responsibility to carry it out.
- **A patient heart:** God sometimes reveals His will instantaneously, but God often reveals His will over time. We must learn to wait, trusting that God's answer will come.
- **A clear conscience:** sin separates a person from God. It is necessary to restore the fellowship through confession, to receive guidance from God (Psalm 35:1-5, 1 John 1:5-9).
- **An abiding Spirit:** discerning God's will is not independent of our personal relationship with Him. To know God's will, we must know Him. Abiding in Christ Jesus by regular prayer, meditation, reading of Scripture and worship. The practice of Christian spiritual disciplines is central in our communication with God.

Thus a need to maintain a closeness and connectivity with God, through the practice of spiritual disciplines. While the below are not by any means exhaustive – see Foster's book (Foster 1989) comprehensive guide on personal devotions - they do represent a number of the key spiritual disciplines that should be practiced at an individual and corporate level when engaging in God's mission:

- prayer – to let Jesus come into our hearts (O Hallesby 1985, p9);
- meditation – ability to hear God's voice and obey Him (Foster 1989, p21) ;
- study of Scripture (Romans12:2); and
- worship – to know, to feel, to experience Christ (Foster 1989, p199).

The importance of Scripture is outlined by Wolterstorff (Wolterstorff 1980)

*These Scriptures are taken as authoritative guides because Christians are persuaded that it is integral to God's mode of working for human renewal to speak to his human creatures. In the Bible we find an authoritative record of some of what God said to ancient persons and peoples; and by way of those ancient words we hear God speaking to us today. True, God's speech to us today is not confined to the Bible, but what he says there is the touchstone, the criterion, for what he says to us in other modes and manners. Convinced of this, the Christian community acknowledges the Bible as authoritative for life and thought. Of course the Bible does not offer specific counsel for every concrete situation that we face. It gives guidelines, paradigm situations, advice by way of example. Essential to maturing in faith is learning how to get from that to one's own concrete situation. (Wolterstorff 1980, p12)*

It is important to note that as with integral mission where you can't separate the spiritual from the physical, then you shouldn't be able to separate the spiritual disciplines from the professional disciplines you engage in during your course of work. The two are inseparable. The daily work of the people forming a Christian organization, their everyday routine, should be deep-rooted in Scripture and conducted in an attitude of prayer and worship, listening to God and obeying. There should be no "spiritual" side of activities and a "professional" side, things that are inseparable don't have sides. You can't opt out of the professional disciplines or the spiritual disciplines, because you don't feel capable or don't have the time, or aren't inclined that way. When things are integral, you don't have options. Thus with a telephone call, a conversation, a strategy planning meeting, an email; all things will embrace the physical and spiritual and God will be there, at the centre. And when an organization acknowledges that God is there at the centre, guiding all physical and spiritual actions in a seamless way then the credit and glory will go to the One where credit and glory are due.

*God aims to exalt himself by working for those who wait on him. Prayer is the essential activity of waiting for God: acknowledging our helplessness and his power, calling upon him for help, seeking his counsel. (Piper 1986, p140)*

*Prayer is a means by which the Lord of all brings His determined purposes to pass. (Motyer 1974, p155)*

*Prayer at its best is the expression of the total life... All things being equal, our prayers are only as powerful as our lives. In the long pull we pray only as well as we live. (Tozer 1990, p79)*

*God wants worshippers before workers; indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship. It is inconceivable that a sovereign and holy God should be so hard up for workers that He would press into service anyone who had been empowered regardless of his moral qualifications. The very stones would praise Him if the need arose and a thousand legions of angels would leap to do His will. (Tozer 1989, p44)*

*Following Jesus will inevitably lead us into severe conflict with evil. This evil will surround us and attack us and threaten to destroy our faith... Life is war... So we see repeatedly in Scripture that prayer is a walkie-talkie for warfare, not a domestic intercom for increasing conveniences. The point of prayer is empowerment for mission. (Piper 1986, p146,147)*

*Praying the kingdom means remembering that bringing the kingdom is God's business... (Myers 1998)*

*The Christian life is a life of warfare. From the time we accept God's invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden" to the time God withdraws us from the battlefield by way of death (rapture), we are engaged in a serious warfare... (Adeyemo 2002, p61)*

*The primary weapon against the powers has always been and will always remain the liberating message of Jesus. That small word or testimony is sufficient to bring down the whole army of powers and principalities. (Jorgensen 2002, p224)*

*Christ met and overcame Satan in prayer and fasting, and he later told his disciples that the "Prince of this world" can be overcome only by prayer and fasting. Do we think modernity, with all its strengths and seductions, will be different? (Guinness 1999, p316)*

*We recognize that in our engagement in struggles for freedom and justice in the world, we fight "not against flesh and blood", but against the rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). Hence*

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*prayer becomes a necessary dimension of our engagement. Freedom and justice are signs of the kingdom of God; through prayer we receive the strength and hope in believing that God's kingdom will come.* (Declaration of Osejik 1991, p5)

# Eschatology

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Whilst the church's efforts, to bring about a better world, have eternal significance; such a kingdom will be of a temporal nature. However, his kingdom present will eventually lead to his kingdom future. An eschatological hope grounded in the return of Christ Jesus and the fulfilment of his Father's mission: a kingdom future that will last for eternity. A number of writers have attempted to portray the vast dimension that eternity presents:

*Imagine a rock rising out of the sea: a massive slab of rock, one hundred miles high and one hundred miles wide. Then, once every 1,000 years a seagull comes and rests on top of the rock and sharpens its beak. Thus when that rock has been worn away, you will have had a glimpse of eternity.* Heard at church service - author unknown

*When we've been there a thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun.* (Newton u.d.)

Such descriptions put into perspective our limited life-span here on earth. The church's work to alleviate poverty, to bring about a just and peaceful world, to advocate for the vulnerable and marginalized in society will provide relief to many – a relief that for an individual may span a lifetime, 50 years, 60 years – maybe even reaching 100 years: a relief that may span generations. But in relation to the eschatological hope, such a time span is but a minute drop in a vast ocean – and this eschatological hope should constantly encourage and inform the church as it participates in God's mission.

*Eschatology provides a worldview framework for the church's mission in the contemporary age. For the world and the Christian faith community we live in the present era of the already-not-yet. We have tasted the goodness of the eternal community and fellowship with God through Christ. At the same time we have not entered into the fullness of God's future community.* (Vencer 2002, p29)

*It is important for those concerned for human transformation to keep the end of the story in mind. This is where the triune God is going. This is the best human future.* (Myers 1998, p42)

*We need an eschatology for mission which is both future-directed and oriented to the here and now. It must be an eschatology that holds in creative and redemptive tension the already and the not yet; the world of sin and rebellion, and the world God loves; the new age that has already begun and the old that has not ended; justice as well as justification; the gospel of liberation and the gospel of salvation. Christian hope does not spring from despair about the present. We hope because of what we have already experienced. Christian hope is both possession and yearning, repose and activity, arrival and being on the way. Since God's victory is certain, believers can work both patiently and enthusiastically, blending careful planning with urgent obedience, motivated by the patient impatience of the Christian hope. The disciples' being sent to the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) is the only reply they get to their question about when God would be inaugurated in its fullness.* (Bosch 1991, p508)

*The Church serves the kingdom by spreading throughout the world the "gospel values" which are an expression of the kingdom and which help people to accept God's plan. It is true that the inchoate reality of the kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live "gospel values" and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills (cf. Jn 3:8). But it must immediately be added that this temporal dimension of the kingdom remains*

*incomplete unless it is related to the kingdom of Christ present in the Church and straining towards eschatological fullness.*

*The many dimensions of the kingdom of God do not weaken the foundations and purposes of missionary activity, but rather strengthen and extend them. The Church is the sacrament of salvation for all mankind, and her activity is not limited only to those who accept her message. She is a dynamic force in mankind's journey toward the eschatological kingdom, and is the sign and promoter of gospel values. The Church contributes to mankind's pilgrimage of conversion to God's plan through her witness and through such activities as dialogue, human promotion, commitment to justice and peace, education and the care of the sick, and aid to the poor and to children. In carrying on these activities, however, she never loses sight of the priority of the transcendent and spiritual realities which are premises of eschatological salvation. (Paulus 1990, section 20)*

*God acts in history and creates a people of God. But human history has been separated into sacred – where God is at work among his people - and secular. The key to uniting them is to regard human history from the perspective of the final Kingdom in which God will fulfil his purpose by the renewal of all creation. (Sugden & Barclay 1990)*

An eschatological viewpoint on engagement with the poor, it gives members of the church and Christian organizations an unimaginable assurance in times of trouble and personal risk. Even to the ultimate point of risking one's life, as particularly experienced by the early church, the early missionaries and experienced by the faithful today:

*...it is quite clear that the eschatological certainty of eternal life gives freedom to risk one's present life. (Petersen 1998, p24)*

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